

KILLING **ME** SOFTLY, ROUGHLY, AND JUST ABOUT EVERY OTHER FUCKING WAY IMAGINABLE:

100 SPECTACULAR

SUICIDES

Hopeless. You see the big sun, the green grass, the happy, happy kids riding bikes and sucking on popsicles, and you feel shut off from it, an invisible dust particle floating in the shade. So you walk away from the crowd and keep walking. The world flickers on and off around you like an old TV. Wallpaper-patterned film negatives fly past. If you listen closely, you can hear a low, yawning drone a hundred million years old. You sink into the ear-splitting quiet. As you turn a corner, you're nose-to-nose with death.

You surrender. The blood falls like rain. A big metal vacuum cleaner latches onto your mouth and sucks out the breath. The grey waves come darker and darker. The rest is oily-smooth blackness as you skid through space on an icicle sled. Lights out. Nighty-night.

Let's talk about suicide, the unforgivable sin. The topic induces a static discomfort, thoughts of unutterable sacrilege. Taking one's own life flies against every supposed survival instinct, yet it happens everywhere in numbers greater than murder. Killing others can be understood as a byproduct of food-chain economics, but killing yourself allows for no such easy rationales. Murder's pretty much a cottage entertainment industry, but people recoil at suicide. They pussyfoot around it, trying not to rouse it from slumber. While studying murder can bring the emotional release that comes with seeing a good explosion, mulling over suicide is more like watching the walls slowly crumble on a condemned building. There's no primal-scream payoff.

That's because people like looking at a car crash as long as it's not their own. They won't flinch at hours of atrocity footage but can't handle a nick on their own finger. Humans are numbly aware that they're only a trauma or two away from yanking their own plug. If you're the depressive type, suicide is never far away, always tapping on your shoulder and breathing softly down your neck.

Personally, we're pro-choice on the matter. But we feel it's better to fight death with your last scrap of strength, to take your pain out on someone else. They deserve it more. When *we* kill, it ain't gonna be ourselves.

But here we are, serving up a cornucopia of self-extinction. We hope all of our enemies find it useful. A few notes: Merely causing one's own death doesn't constitute suicide. Some clear level of intent has to be displayed. So the surfeit of rock-star overdoses and autoerotic fatalities, as enjoyable as they are, aren't included here. To qualify for this list, a person had to *try* to die, and with the exception of a few Honorable Mentions, they had to succeed in killing themselves. There aren't many things more detestable than a failed suicide, a two-time loser strung out in a half-dead purgatory. We've also mostly steered away from suicides where there were hints of coercion. Thus, no kamikazes, but the Mount Mihara suicides more than compensate. Jonestown is glaringly absent, but that was covered in the last issue as a mass murder. We make up for it with the Old Believers, Masada, and the Koresh debacle.

It's one of life's cruel paradoxes that truly worthless people never appreciate their worthlessness and thus aren't prone to commit suicide. That's why we have room in our otherwise impregnable hearts for the individuals on this list. They all display an emotive capacity which makes them superior to the clueless fucks who drive around in their tiny cars and never consider killing themselves. The dumb jerkoffs who swagger with beer-bellied self-assurance are the ones who *should* be thinking about it, and *seriously*. In contrast, those who contemplate, attempt, or complete suicide feel that life sucks a fat, purple dick, and they're right. But if there were more people like them, this world wouldn't be half as bad. Ironically, it's the *non-suicidal* who make life unbearable.

#1
Anonymous
Polish Bread
THE HUMAN TOOLBOX

Her consonant-clotted name is unknown, but this daughter of *Polska's* self-mutilating doggedness warrants her inclusion on our honor roll. Though available details are flimsy, this story involves a case of gustatory self-abasement even odder than the gallons of sperm rumored to have been guzzled by Rod Stewart a few years back. What is known is that this nineteenth-century maiden got the raw end of a failed romance. When her lover abandoned her, cavalierly burying his kielbasa in another bed of sauerkraut, she began to eat compulsively. Whereas many spurned slits turn to chocolate-drowned cheesecake or fistfuls of bonbons, she did not. Neither did she find comfort in potato pie, potato pudding, or lonely bowls of potato soup. Instead, she put herself on an iron-rich diet. Over five months, she ate a hundred and one pins, three knives, seven window bolts, four spoons, a brass crucifix, twenty nails, and nineteen coins. She also scarfed down three glass fragments, a rock, and two rosary beads. It is uncertain which trinket dealt the death blow, but one imagines the

casket jingling as it was lowered into the cold Polish soil.

HONORABLE MENTION

According to the book *The Traitor Within*, a middle-aged woman in Canada committed suicide by ingesting fishhooks, open safety pins, a few four-inch sewing needles, handfuls of nails, tacks, and some corkscrews. She chased it all down with broken glass.

HONORABLE MENTION

The *New York Times* of October 31, 1925, cites an unnamed British suicide in whose stomach was found "[a] piece of lead piping, two pieces of slate pencil, two pieces of metal boot tips, four nails, two needles, part of a safety pin, [a] pair of small tweezers, [a] piece of glass, [a] collapsible top metal cap, and [a] small piece of rubber."

HONORABLE MENTION

In 1919, over two pounds of housewares were found in the digestive system of Massachusetts

prisoner Charles W. Buzzell. Among the items uncovered were: one hundred and seventy-nine glass slivers; most of a safety razor; a two-foot dog chain; a buckle; and several nails, screws, and staples. Buzzell had gone to the prison doctor with complaints of "indigestion." After emergency surgery, he survived.

#2
Colleen Applegate
FROM GIRL NEXT DOOR
TO STROKE-FILM WHORE

Purity is a wondrous, strange thing, the morning song of nature, an effervescent stream of thawing winter ice. It is the creamy white wool of a lamb drinking from that stream, a guileless little lamb skipping through verdant meadows under saffron rays of sun.

But put a farmer in that meadow, a pickled old bastard with a giant red cock, and get him to cram his greasy Johnson into the squealing lamb's tight ass, and the fun begins. Purity's as boring as bread mold. It really only works for infants and dead people.

Colleen Applegate oozed purity like tree sap. Everything about her—the rosy-cheeked name, her pastoral hometown of Farmington, Minnesota, her prim Catholic family, her role as high-school cheerleader—bespoke high morals and a solid hymen.

That's why dicks rose in unison at the sight of her Midwestern cherry pie spreading across cum-splattered movie screens nationwide. In a porn industry glutted with skanky, toothless female pincushions, Colleen's implied purity was as refreshing as a wintergreen breath mint.

Her transition from pompom girl to sperm spittoon began in March, 1982, when the eighteen-year-old lass and her boyfriend drove to Hollywood in a black El Camino. Within weeks, she became a professional twat huckster, flashing the bush for sixth-rate porno shutterbugs. Her pristine quim caused a stir, and she soon graduated to layouts for *Penthouse* and *Hustler*, her snatch snatching up to two grand per session.

By the fall of '82, she was starring in sex films under the pseudonym "Shauna Grant," a name more redolent of heady vaginal fumes. She would sit on dicks in a total of thirty features, *Meisterwerks* such as *Suzie Superstar*, *Virginia*, and *Flesh and Laces*. If her acting showed the emotional range of sea kelp, no one seemed to care. In the midst of getting herpes and an abortion, she received three nominations from the Erotic Film Awards.

Back in Farmington, her family put on the best face possible. Her boyfriend, with whom she had split after a few weeks in L.A., made sure to blab to fellow Minnesotans about Colleen's new career. Everyone in town knew that Colleen, the eldest of five Applegate children, was spreading it like peanut butter. At school, malicious pranksters plastered Colleen's lurid layouts on her sister Veronica's locker. When Colleen visited home in the fall of 1983, patting blood from her coke-smeared nose, her family



Colleen Applegate doing what she did best.

must have wished that the earth would open up and swallow them whole.

She assured her folks that she had quit the sex racket and was settled in Palm Springs with a man named Jake Ehrlich. She neglected to tell them that Jake was a coke dealer who kept her strung out on powder. Big Jake was busted in February, 1984. Adrift in the desert, Colleen blew Jake's remaining cash on nose candy. At the Erotic Film Awards in March, the nearly penniless gash struck a deal to lick more on-screen dicks in exchange for more blue money. On March 21, the night before shooting for the new film was to begin, she pulled out a .22-caliber rifle from beneath Jake's bed and blasted through her coke-soaked cranium. She died two days later.

Two subsequent TV films were based on Colleen's transition from small-town cheerleader to sleaze-flick prick-pouch: the fictionalized *Shattered Innocence* and *Death of a Porn Queen*, a PBS documentary. While chastity's perfume lasts only as long as a rose petal fluttering in the wind, the stink of carnality wafts on forever.

#3

Diane Arbus

THE HAZARDS OF SLUMMING

If you stare at Diane Arbus's photos long enough, it's almost impossible *not* to consider suicide. There's a fatally depressing bluntness to her snapshots, a dead, bludgeoning grey which spreads inward from all four corners. A critic spoke of her ability to "X-ray" her subjects' emotions. Arbus photographed what she termed the "bloodied people": Russian midgets, Jewish giants, flabby nudists, crying babies, Greenwich Village buldykes, greasy muscle-men, flea-bitten drag queens, bored hermaphrodites, scowling old women, topless dancers, deformed patriots, doped-out couples, and wrinkled society matrons. One of her last sessions, involving a group of Mongoloid adults cavorting in an open field clad in ghost capes and skull masks, captures a bottomless death vibe which the viewer is never quite able to shake.



But for all of her subject matter's lowlife trappings, Arbus was a product of uptown wealth. Her family owned a Fifth Avenue department store, and the woman born Diane Nemerov grew up in an eleventh-floor Central Park West apartment staffed with maids, chefs, and nannies. She was the archetypal slummer, an upper-crusty, wannabe-funky boho chick. "I was born way up the ladder of middle-class respectability," she confessed to a photography class, "and I've been clambering down as fast as I could ever since." However, unlike most of those cut from the *faux pauvreté* cloth, Diane was blessed with an incandescent talent.

Suicide

At eighteen she married Allan Arbus, the mousy guy who played a shrink on *M*A*S*H*, and the two worked together as fashion photographers for years. But she grew to hate the slick, stifling advertising world, and an emotionally deflating breakup with Allan coincided with a swelling interest in disturbing subject matter. So in the early sixties, like Weegee twenty years before her, she set out in search of Manhattan's freaks, derelicts, and irreparably wounded human debris. With the black leather jacket and concentration-camp short hair of a commie art commando, she trudged about New York weighed down like a Christmas tree with photographic equipment. Reveling in her brown teeth and sharp female odors, she zeroed in on all that was unpleasant. "What are you doing on such a gorgeous day?" asked an art director who bumped into her one sunny Saturday morning. "Trying to find some unhappy people," came Diane's stony reply.

Throughout the sixties, she compiled a portfolio rivaling that of any photographer before or since. At earlier exhibitions, her photos were covered with spittle from incensed observers, but as the decade wore on, her mastery became evident to all but the most stalwart art-world reactionaries.

Yet it grew harder for Arbus to divorce herself from her downbeat material. She kept her apartment dark and surrounded her bed with her latest grainy black-and-white prints. She sometimes joined in the orgies of the dwarves and nudists she photographed. As the seventies dawned, she described herself as smitten by "monumental blues" made worse by insomnia, hepatitis, and worries about encroaching age. She spoke eerily of the aforementioned Mongoloid photo shoot, of her discomfiture that the retarded adults didn't look straight into the lens like her earlier subjects, that she felt unable to "control" them.

She had loathed the oppressive New York summer ever since childhood, and the summer of '71 seemed worse than ever. "My work doesn't do it for me anymore," she told friends in mid-July. On the morning of July 26, she slid a photo of a death mask under the door of a friend in her apartment building. The next day, her close compadre Marvin Israel became concerned when Diane failed to answer the phone. Israel entered Diane's apartment on the

twenty-eighth to find her lying in an empty bathtub, fully clothed and fully dead. Her wrists were slashed, although she was later found to have died of a barbiturate overdose. Her diary was opened to July 26, under which date she had written "The Last Supper."

There were unsubstantiated rumors that Diane Arbus took pictures of herself while she died. Lisette Model, a photography teacher of Arbus's back in the fifties, received a suicide note but never released it to the public. "I want to photograph what is evil," Arbus had told Model back when Diane was Lisette's student. She succeeded, but evil swallowed her up as part of the deal.

#4

Linda Marie Ault

DOGGED BY HER PARENTS

It was the free-lovin' year of 1968, and Linda Ault felt she was old enough to spend a Friday night away from home. It got lonely out in the Arizona desert, and at twenty-one, she couldn't be faulted if she sought solace in a man's arms. Besides, he wasn't just some bum, he was an Air Force lieutenant.

Nature, though, had dealt the red-headed accounting major a set of gila monsters for parents. They evidently felt that she was scattering her eggs about like cactus pollen. They didn't appreciate the fact that the young officer spent the night landing on their daughter's airstrip and that Linda, instead of resisting, seemed more than willing to lube the flyboy's fuselage. The worst part of all was that she didn't seem a damned bit sorry.

They decided they were going to learn her a lesson. But after whipping Linda with a mesquite branch, Mrs. Ault felt that the girl didn't exhibit sufficient remorse. On Saturday afternoon, they withdrew her from college. Linda remained unpenitent. "I told Linda," Mrs. Ault would later say, "that after all she had put so many people through and wasn't sorry, maybe she would suffer over an animal. She loved animals."

On Sunday morning the Aults, intending to "wake Linda up," commandeered their daughter and her pet dog Beauty into the desert scrub. The Aults forced Linda to shovel a small grave for Beauty. "The best way is through the head," Mrs. Ault told Linda, handing her a loaded pistol and holding Beauty out in front of her. Linda hesitated. Did they really expect her to kill it? This was a dog whose poop she had cleaned, whose genitals she may have stroked in softer moments, a varmint who obviously gave her more emotional satisfaction than her crustacean-hearted parents. So instead of drilling lead into the cowering canine, she tore open her own head with one shot, departing this vale of tears and leaving Beauty at her parents' questionable mercy.



Nebraska letter-carrier Harry Howell shot himself in August, 1922, after his dog died.

HONORABLE MENTION

When Donna Mayberry, president of California's Southern Alameda County Humane Society, decided to kill herself with carbon monoxide in 1988, she took her two dogs and sixteen cats along with her.

HONORABLE MENTION

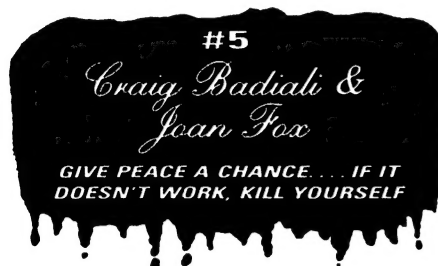
One week after her dog was put to sleep, Mary H. Lynton of East Orange, New Jersey, followed the mutt into eternity by inhaling gas from her kitchen in July of 1928.

HONORABLE MENTION

Crying, "I want to die, too," after his Boston terrier Peggy bit the dust, nine-year-old Russell Mueller of Chicago shot himself in the thigh in January, 1922, crippling himself for life.

HONORABLE MENTION

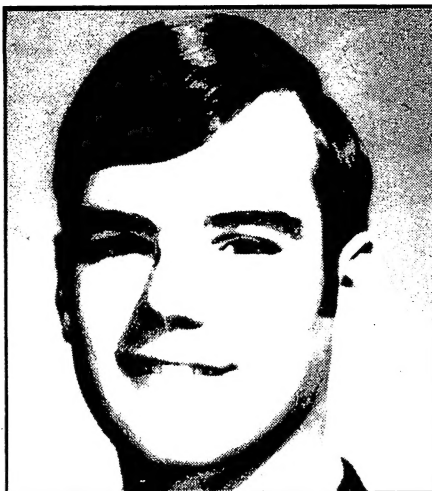
British citizen Ramsawa Singh purposely overdosed in 1978, leaving a suicide note for his wife and one for Carlo, his pet racing pigeon.



It was the best of times and it was the worst of times. No, on second thought, it was just the worst of times. It was a time of fringed suede jackets, velvet posters, hash oil, and tangerine incense. It was an era of swirling change, radical upheaval, and communally shared crotch lice. Kids nationwide followed the demonic musical gospels of Leonard Cohen and Buffy Sainte-Marie. With anti-military militance, they joined hands and swayed their dirty asses. They placed sticks of grass between their quivering lips, struck matches, and blasted off into Nowheresville.

Craig and Joan were a pair of wide-eyed Jersey teens who were just bonkers about peace. They were the type who made a point of befriending even the misfits, the sort who were eager to share a sandwich with you and ask how you're feelin'. They were up, up, up with people.

First there was Craig, a poetry-writing, guitar-strumming, protest-song-singing young feller known for nursing sick birds back to health. He was a confirmed Peter, Paul & Mary fan whose



favorite PP&M tune, "The Great Mandala," dealt with a boy who starved himself to death after being imprisoned for opposing a war. Craig got very angry when kids in class laughed casually about war casualties. "You wonder," he wrote in one poem, "how a man could look/at the face of another/and kill him." Ominously, he identified with *The Catcher in the Rye*.



Then there was Joan, an uptight cheerleader, field-hockey player, and class treasurer. She also wrote poems, played guitar, and sang protest songs. For the most part, she did whatever Craig did.

On October 14, 1969, Craig's brother passed by Craig's bedroom and spotted him writing a series of letters. That night, Craig burned most of his poetry in a backyard incinerator. He also removed everything from his bedroom walls except one item, a sign which read, "DON'T GO AWAY MAD—JUST GO AWAY." Over in her house, Joan was busy writing letters, too.

The next day, "Moratorium Day," the pair joined more than four thousand others for an anti-war rally at Glassboro State College. They left the demonstration before it was over. Later in the afternoon, Craig told a friend that he had a bum trip when he sensed a lack of "true feeling" at the gathering, that some attendees seemed more interested in listening to a Mets

game on the radio than striving for global peace.

That night, Craig and Joan drove in Craig's blue Ford Falcon to a rural road and left the engine running. About twelve hours later, on a dewy autumn morning, a farmer found the car parked under a buttonwood tree. The windows were entirely caked on the inside with black soot, interrupted only by Craig's face, which was smushed against the driver's-side glass. The farmer notified police, who opened the car doors to find Joan slumped against Craig's shoulder. The pair's skin was fire-engine red, pointing to carbon-monoxide poisoning. Two guitars sat on the back seat. Twenty-four sealed air-mail envelopes had been placed on the front dash. They were suicide notes, and although police refused to release their contents, two of the letters eventually leaked to the press. According to Craig and Joan's request, the tormented peaceniks were buried next to each other. "They wanted peace?" taunted a hawkish type at a local bar. "Well, they got peace."

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Somehow, Craig and Joan believed that their double self-cessation would force folks to embrace life's sanctity and end war forevermore. Mystifyingly, their valiant gesture of love failed to end the problems in Vietnam. Craig and Joan should have heeded a slogan popular at the time: "Killing for peace is like fucking for virginity."

SUICIDE NOTE:

(Craig's farewell poem, sent to an undisclosed recipient):

Why?/Because we see/that people just/won't do and say/what they feel/and you can't just/tell someone to./It seems that/people are only/touched by death/and maybe people/will be touched/enough to look into/their lives/and if just one/person is touched/enough to do/something constructive/and peaceful with/their life, then/maybe our death/was worth it.

Why—because we/love our fellow/man enough to/sacrifice our lives/so that they will/try to find the/ecstasy in just/being alive.

Love and Peace,
Craig Badiali.

SUICIDE NOTE:

(Craig's letter to his friend Frank DiGenova):

... I waited until last to write you.

My life is complete except all my brothers are in trouble—war, poverty, hunger, hostility. My purpose is to make them understand all this trouble. Maybe this will start a chain reaction

of awakening, love, communication. I've been so down, so goddam [sic] down, I can't get up. Not even pot helps.

Read my poetry and make people understand how I feel. Make them tell each other how beautiful they are. Take my life into yours. If I sound strange, it's because I am insane with sorrow and distress. Please make them see!

Love and Peace, Craig.

#6

Thomas Barker

LIMEY ON A STICK

No one knew who the haggard-looking man was. As a small group sat before a fireplace in a Leeds, England, hotel lobby two days before Christmas, 1856, it didn't seem to matter—he was welcome to share in the season's joy. Appearing troubled, he had wandered in from the cold night, requested a pipe, and sat peevishly before the fire.

It didn't have to happen. He could have thrown another log on the fire, sipped some tea, and quietly passed wind. He could have warmed his toes, cracked his knuckles, and inquired about rugby scores. He could have read *A Christmas Carol* while chewing on a buttered scone. If he had felt the yuletide spirit, he could have roasted marshmallows and handed them out to indigent children. But the dancing flames seemed only to remind him of some personal hell. He just sat there, looking pissed.

Ten minutes passed. He approached the fire and placed a poker into the embers. He waited until it glowed red-hot. He then removed it and tapped it on the floor, knocking off all the

SUICIDE

surplus dirt and ash. Then, in the manner of a sword-swallower, he shoved the simmering ingot down his throat. Within an instant, the pink mucoid tissues inside his mouth had sizzled into a blood-spurting charcoal burger. Hotel patrons wrested the poker away from Barker (who probably was unable to bark at this point) and spirited him away to a doctor's care. Over the course of the next five days, someone asked him why he had attempted to become a human shish kebab. Barker said he had no idea. Then, as should only happen with everyone who can't explain their actions, he died.

HONORABLE MENTION

In January, 1888, at his home in the British town of Falmouth, a certain Rear-Admiral Versturme, sixty-two, shoved a red-hot poker in his guts several times, killing himself.

HONORABLE MENTION

Three years before Versturme's suicide, Thomas Roycroft of Chatham, England, placed a red-hot poker's handle on the floor, with the searing tip pointing upward, and brought his throat down on the fiery lance, which penetrated through his throat, his tongue, and up into the roof of his mouth.

#7

Raymond Belknap & James Vance

LOOK, MA—NO FACE!

YEEEEAAGGGHH! The castrato voice of Rob Halford, Judas Priest's leather-swaddled songbird, rattled the thin bedroom walls of the Sparks, Nevada, tract home. It was the Priest's *Stained Class* album, a Christmas gift from Raymond Belknap, eighteen, to his best buddy, twenty-year-old James Vance. The two had been smoking weed and chugging brews all afternoon, playing the LP over and over and louder and louder. RRRROWLLLL!

After several headbanging hours, the pair barricaded the door and began tearing the shit out of Belknap's bedroom. The only things they didn't wreck were the turntable and *Stained Class*. Flushed with metal mania, they made an abrupt suicide pact. Belknap grabbed a sawed-off shotgun along with two shells and jumped out of the first-story window with Vance.

It was near dusk on December 23, 1985. The two beat a path into a church playground a block away. Belknap hugged his best friend, sat on the merry-go-round, stuck the gun under his chin, and blew his head off his skinny shoulders. Vance, who until that point hadn't been sure whether the suicide pact was just some drunken teen macho bluster, was besieged with thoughts. If he didn't go through with it, he'd betray his best friend. If he didn't shoot himself, the cops might charge him with murder. He lifted the blood-dripping musket, loaded a shell, placed the muzzle under his chin, and let it rip.

He lived. The buckshot tore through his cheeks, teeth, jaw, and nose. His mug was damaged beyond recognition, resembling Popeye after a chemical face peel. When he was well enough to ride his bike, he pedaled around the neighborhood and scared small children with his Quasimodo visage. He even fathered a child with a woman who undoubtedly had a strong stomach and a roaring sex drive. Vance endured throbbing pain for the next three years, becoming addicted to prescription downs and undergoing several operations. He lapsed into a coma on Thanksgiving Day, 1988, apparently as the result of a self-administered overdose of painkillers. He croaked six days later.

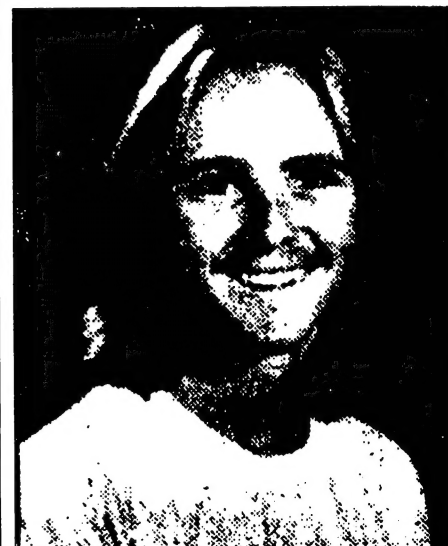
A few months after he bungled his suicide pact with Belknap, Vance made the disquieting



Belknap: typically pimply heavy-metal delinquent.

claim that Judas Priest's music gave him and his friend the idea to kill themselves. "All of a sudden, we got a suicide message," he stated, "and we got tired of life." He wrote a letter to Aunetta Roberson, Belknap's mother, explaining his odd motivation: "I believe that alcohol and heavy metal music, such as 'Judas Priest,' led us or even 'mesmerized' us into believing [sic] that the answer to 'life was death.'"

The boys' parents, perhaps to reclaim a measure of dignity for their sons, or maybe sniffing a mother lode, filed a multi-million-dollar lawsuit against Judas Priest and CBS Records. Vivian Lynch, a lawyer who helped file the suit, alleged that hidden subliminal messages on *Stained Class* pushed "the boys over the edge into eternity....[Judas Priest] created the filth and created the garbage that polluted the minds of the young people of Nevada, and they continue to do so." Lynch's bilious distaste for Judas Priest didn't prevent her from standing in line during the trial to get an autograph from the band.



Vance: not a bad-lookin' kid...



...until he blew most of his face off with a shotgun.

In court, the legal wrangling over hidden messages and backward masking was worthy of Spinal Tap or the furthest fringes of born-again Satanic hysteria. Using digitized stereo equipment to play *Stained Class* backward, prosecution witnesses tried to convince a skeptical courtroom that the band had purposely planted phrases such as "Fuck the Lord...fuck all of you...let's be dead...try suicide," and the capper, "DO IT," in order to nudge gullible fans over the precipice. "I heard a 'D,'" said Vance's mother regarding the pivotal phrase, "but I didn't hear the rest of it. I became too upset." Defense witnesses contended that what sounded like "DO IT" were actually "expressive grunts...combined with the sound of a Leslie guitar and a high-hat cymbal."

Did the victims' parents ever consider the possibility that their sons' suicides could be blamed on factors other than alleged commands issued by a combo of aging, gaseous Brits? Was there any significance to the fact that Belknap's mother had been married four times or that court records showed that the boy's father physically abused him? Could anything be made of the fact that Vance's biological father split from the family before Vance was born, that both Vance's mother and stepfather were said to have drinking problems, or that James was beaten by his mother as a child?

What about the boys themselves? Did it change matters when one considered that Belknap was a high-school dropout who used weed, alcohol, coke, and speed? That he once stole four hundred and fifty dollars from an employer? That he was caught flashing his nuts at women? That a mere week before his suicide,

he was charged with shooting a dart gun at a neighbor's pet?

You could ask the same questions about Vance: Did a known predilection for marijuana, cocaine, amphetamines, alcohol, heroin, LSD, barbiturates, and PCP somehow impair his judgment? What could be gleaned from the fact that at age seven, he was sent to a therapist for tying a belt around his head and pulling out clumps of his hair in class? Or that he attempted to strangle his mother a year later? Or that he assaulted his mother as a teenager and threatened her on separate occasions with a hammer and a loaded pistol? Wasn't it strange that in the two years before trying suicide, he had run away from home thirteen times? Didn't it seem odd that both boys collected guns, spoke about becoming mercenaries, and frequently talked about committing mass murder in the Reno area?

The judge seemed to think so. He ruled that heavy metal could not be blamed for the teenagers' deaths, making the world safe once again for Judas Priest. However, he left open the possibility that so-called subliminal messages could impel someone to kill themselves. As we go to press, Belknap and Vance's parents have filed a new lawsuit against Halford and his leathery gang.



The Bible reports that Judas Iscariot, one of Christ's twelve apostles, hanged himself after turning the Big Kahuna over to the Romans for thirty pieces of silver.

#8 *The Bergenfield Four* EXHAUSTED

Every high school has its burnouts, pitted against jocks and honor students in a perpetually hostile triad. Scruffily clustered in the school's smoking lane, they are readily identified by the runic icons of mass-produced metal: concert sweat shirts, ancient denim, scraggly adolescent moustaches, bloodshot eyes, and resinous fingers. They live low-rent soap operas revolving around cheap dope, indifferent parents, and failed romance. Facing a long, meaningless adulthood, they party desperately.

Within the vast Superfund clean-up site known as north Jersey sits the city of Bergenfield, a brown little working-class town with more than its share of burnouts. Tommy Olton and Tommy Rizzo, both nineteen, and sisters Cheryl and Lisa Burress (seventeen and sixteen, respectively) fit the mold well enough. Bergenfield's police chief described them as "pain-in-the-ass-type kids." All were dropouts except Lisa, and she was on her way.

Of the four, Olton seemed the most troubled. His father had killed himself with a gun when the boy was fourteen. Tommy's biology teacher would recall how he sat through class "with his head down on his desk" and once slit his wrists with lab scalpels. He had a rep as a free-drinking hell-raiser who spent time in and out of rehab. His friend Tommy Rizzo worked intermittently for a construction firm and thought about enlisting in the Army. He, too, had been treated for substance abuse. The Burress sisters' father had died of an alleged drug overdose back in the late seventies. They made no secret of the fact that they hated their stepfather.

To compound their aimless ennui, four disturbing teen deaths hit Bergenfield over the summer of 1986. Two males, purported to be best friends, were struck by freight trains in separate alcohol-related incidents. In August, another male drowned himself in a pond. On September 2, Lisa Burress, her boyfriend Joe Major, and Tommy Rizzo drove out to the Palisades cliffs for a beer party. While playing around on the rocks, Joe lost his footing and plunged two hundred feet to his death. Lisa had turned sixteen that day. After Joe died, she said she'd never have another happy birthday. Tommy Rizzo never again had a normal night's sleep.

Lisa, Cheryl, and the two Tommys frequently visited Joe's grave. The four grew closer over the bleak Jersey winter. One Friday night in March, Olton slashed his wrists. He refused treatment after being taken to a local hospital, argued with his mom that Sunday, and subsequently went to stay with the Rizzos. On Monday, Cheryl told a friend that she had physically assaulted her mother during a fight. Lisa was suspended from high school the same day. Throughout Tuesday afternoon, as they readied to go cruising with the two Tommys, the girls made an estimated thirty



Tommy Rizzo: wasted teenager.

phone calls. Cheryl told one friend she was "going to see Joe," her sister's dead boyfriend.

SUICIDE

The group spent that night rolling through Bergenfield in Olton's stereotypically dudelike '77 Camaro. At about three a.m., they pulled into an Amoco station and purchased three dollars' worth of gas. They also tried to remove a ten-foot hose from a coin-operated vacuum cleaner but were prevented by an attendant. They gave up and drove to the Foster Village apartment complex and entered garage #74, where burnouts frequently gathered to party.

Their bodies were found at around six-thirty a.m. The Camaro's engine was still running. Carbon monoxide's rapid buildup had turned the high-torqued roadster into a heavy-metal mausoleum. Olton was sitting in the driver's seat. Rizzo was in the back seat with the Burress sisters. Both males had slashed their wrists. A rambling suicide note had been scrawled on a brown paper bag in four different styles of handwriting. All four had signed it, requesting that they be buried together. A cassette cover was found near the bodies. It was AC/DC's *If You Want Blood, You've Got It*.

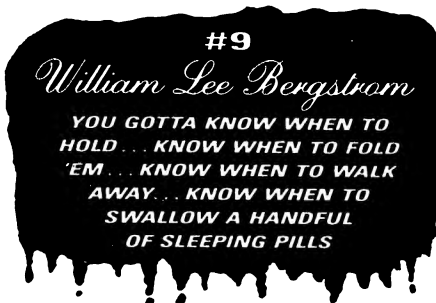
Over the next few weeks, amid an avalanche of national publicity, garage #74 assumed a shrinelike status. Burnouts and nerds alike dropped by to pay their respects. There were rumors that animal sacrifices, candle burnings, and other occultic ceremonies occurred outside the complex. The garage door had been nailed with graffiti which read, **TEENAGE WASTELAND**.

A book based on the incident, *Teenage Wasteland: Suburbia's Dead-End Kids*, was written by Donna Gaines, the woman which history will blame for introducing the Goads to each other.



Several copycat suicides and suicide attempts occurred in the Bergenfield Four's wake. On the

day after the Four's pact made national news, a pair of teenaged girls in suburban Chicago carbon-monoxidized themselves. One was found clutching a rose, the other a wedding album. Within hours, twenty-year-old John Staudt of Clifton, New Jersey, also killed himself with car exhaust. A week after the Four died, a young Bergenfield couple tried to duplicate the Four's suicide by letting their engine run in garage #74, but police found them before they could complete the act. Three separate teenaged males in Illinois, one in Nebraska, and a Washington-state female all died of carbon-monoxide poisoning within a week of the Four. Police found newspaper clippings relating to Bergenfield in the bedroom of Kevin Pyter, one of the dead Illinois males.



The fabulous Las Vegas Strip. Thousand-room motels, billowing fountains, irradiated spires, and block-square marquees. A towering galaxy of wealth. How did such Byzantine opulence sprout from the parched Nevada desert? It came a quarter at a time, from suckers like you.

No one sucked harder than William Lee Bergstrom, the self-proclaimed "Phantom High Roller." On November 16, 1984, the young Texas real-estate magnate approached the craps tables at the downtown Horseshoe Club and dropped a million smackers on the cool green felt. It was the largest single wager in Vegas history. With one unlucky roll of the dice, it was gone. He dispassionately settled his account with the casino and vanished. Less than three months later, he was found in a Vegas hotel room with a bellyful of pills. He left a suicide note which requested that he be cremated and his ashes stored in a vase with an inscription describing him as the "phantom gambler at the Horseshoe who bet a million dollars."

Bergstrom's story was typical of the insatiably greedy eighties. He used an inheritance to refurbish and sell Austin rental properties, becoming a millionaire by age twenty-eight. He then pulled out of real estate and threw his assets into the gold market, where his money swelled further. But smitten by the too-much-is-never-enough *Zeitgeist*, he began placing masochistically huge bets at Sin City gaming tables.

For a while, it worked. In 1980, he had entered the Horseshoe with two suitcases—one empty, the other filled with three-quarters of a million bucks in hundred-dollar bills. When he left, both suitcases were bulging. In the highfalutin manner of a Tom Vu, he hired a limo to putter himself around the country. He bought a house in Hawaii, toured the Orient, and began studying yoga. As late as March, 1984, he won six hundred and fifty-eight thousand greenbacks in one week.



Bergstrom: big bets because of a bone up the butt.

But unbeknownst to his family and friends, Bergstrom was a closet homosexual indulging in covert bone-smuggling sessions with a man named John. After their relationship unraveled, Bergstrom made his reckless, record-setting wager. The night he took his life, Bergstrom phoned the Horseshoe Club's manager and told him that his dissolved romance caused him to risk it all. In placing the monstrous bet, he was also gambling on whether to live: If he won, he intended to give the money to John; if he lost, he planned to cash all his chips in the casino of life. When he pissed away a million scobies, he was actually playing a high-stakes game of "He loves me.... He loves me not...."

SUICIDE NOTE:

(Excerpt of a letter Bergstrom wrote to his family on the eve of his death):

The thing I regret most was thinking in the first place that John's leaving me was a good enough reason to do away with myself.... His leaving me was the only reason I gambled the \$1 million in the first place. I knew that if I lost the million dollars that I would for sure fully [sic] and completely do away with myself.



After Mrs. John Taber's full house beat her husband's straight in a small-stakes Bronx poker game on April 1, 1928, Mr. Taber ran crashing through a closed kitchen window and down onto the sidewalk, ending his life.

#10

Anilia Bhundia

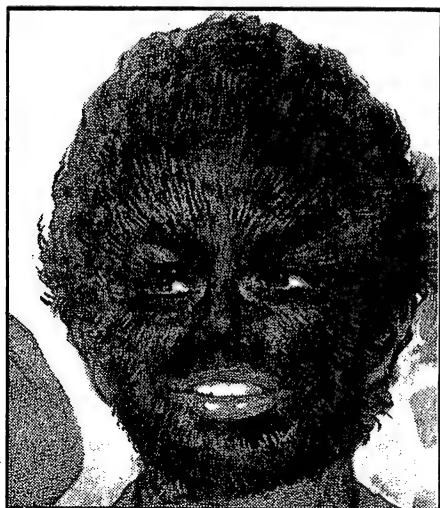
FATAL FOLLICLES OF FACIAL FUZZ

When the benign curlicues took root on Anilia Bhundia's face, it didn't matter to her that they were almost imperceptible to the naked eye. She was certain that the wispy black filaments would blossom into a Malaysian jungle, hiding her cheeks from daylight. The swarthy British girl was of Hindu extraction, and considering her tribe's hirsute tendencies, she may have already developed a hairy nimbus around her areolas and a bush in which you could hide a VCR. One could only imagine the fistfuls of Brillo which hovered above her mango chutney.



Anilia Bhundia: from this...

But the facial hair was too much. She couldn't bear to face her fiancé, Rajesh Gohil. She was unwilling to endure life known as Rajesh's little werewolf of love. Anilia was probably unaware that most suitors are horny enough to fuck a sasquatch.



...to this?

Her family offered to help, but the twenty-one-year-old girl spurned any mention of facial

wax, electrolysis, Nair, or a Lady Norelco. In the summer of 1989, the hairy maiden wandered down to the banks of the Thames. On a riverside bench, she left a handbag containing notes to her parents and boyfriend. Then, instead of pulling out some tweezers and making one final attempt to be done with her whiskers, she leapt into the watery void, where there are no tears, no gnashing of teeth, no feminine sideburns.

SUICIDE NOTE!

(A segment of her letter to Rajesh):

Forget me. I am never going to be able to make you happy.

HONORABLE MENTION

Sixteen-year-old Simon Fox killed himself in the British town of Kexborough after the Army rejected him in 1990. Their rejection was based on Fox's chronic acne problem.

#11

Felix Bourg

MINDBLOWER

Oh là là, April in France! Crêpes dipped in *chocolat* and dusted with powdered sugar. Balloons vanishing into the robin's-egg sky. Mimes around every corner. It was 1922, and the globe's most romantic country was starting to emerge from the shock waves of World War I. The healing had begun, and the positive feeling was nearly as palpable as the fluffy meringues which lined store windows along the Champs Élysées. Poodles nipped at the heels of red-cheeked virgins. Rowing teams languidly paddled along the Seine. Cheating on their spouses, wine-besotted lovers slurped each other's genitals in golden wheat fields.

Felix Bourg, a rakish man of seventy-seven, stepped onto the streets of Tiranges, his hometown. He lit a stick of dynamite, placed it under his hat, and traipsed down the block until the explosive device blasted his head clear off his shoulders, leaving only a bony stem for budding existentialists to ponder.

HONORABLE MENTION

Using explosive compounds found in playing-card spots which he stuffed into a bed leg and placed on a heater, William Kogut blew his head up real good in his San Quentin prison cell on October 9, 1930.

#12

Thomas Lynn Bradford

MURMURS FROM THE ECTOPLASM

Early in this century, a religious movement known as spiritualism was as big as Barney the Dinosaur is today. It peddled the belief that we cast off our bodies after death, becoming pixies and goblins who no longer need to shit, brush our teeth, or wear after-shave. Its followers' lives were ostensibly so dull, they couldn't wait to get on with the *next* life. The movement was comprised of earnest losers who attended séances in order to kibitz with departed loved ones. Through Ouija boards, crystal balls, and post-menopausal Gypsy women, they sought to reach out and touch the dead.

T.L. Bradford was such a man, someone who abstained from sentient pleasures and pointed his antennae toward the hereafter. "When I die, my body goes to science," he once told his Detroit landlord. "It is to be sent to the Michigan Medical Institute. Anyhow, my body does not amount to much." Although an ascetic at heart, Bradford was not without a sense of humor. When the mood hit him, the forty-eight-year-old electrical engineer would amuse friends by donning a cape and doing a Dr.-Jekyll-and-Mr.-Hyde impersonation.

For the most part, though, he devoted his life to the afterlife. His small, dusty room was stuffed with spiritualist texts. He was negotiating with a book house about having his own spiritualist tome published. Then one day, realizing that words would only take him so far, he placed a personals ad in a Detroit newspaper. The ad urged anyone interested in whether the dead could talk with the living to contact Bradford.

A Detroit girl wrote him, and the two decided in subsequent meetings that their riddle could only be solved through direct action: One of them would have to die and beam back a telepathic post-mortem. Bradford volunteered, launching himself into the astral pudding with kitchen gas on the night of February 6, 1921.

His interstellar postcard never arrived. To be fair, if spirits were to alight somewhere on the earth plane, the odds are pretty good that Detroit wouldn't be high on their list.

HONORABLE MENTION

Believing that being dead would aid her in guiding her husband's soul to heaven, a spiritualist named Maud Francher killed her two-year-old son and then swallowed a fatal dose of poison in April, 1921. The Franchers had relocated to New Jersey from Detroit, where they attended a séance in which Maud's father, himself a suicide, "spoke" from the grave.

SUICIDE NOTE:

(Excerpts from two of three letters Francher wrote in the course of killing the baby and herself):

Darling, beloved husband, I am writing you a line on this queer suicide, and I know that everyone will say, "Oh, she has lost her mind"—but I haven't by a long ways. I know just what I am doing. I want you to get married again if you wish. You know about spiritualism, and I want you to go where you can talk to me....Just wait and see if I don't guide you right.

for the needle, happiness?...There is something fascinating in the idea of dashing headlong, in the full vigor of youth and mental power, across that gloomy, mysterious boundary—the valley of the shadow of death, with the charming uncertainty whether one shall find a paradise, beautiful and happy beyond human conception, or a desolate, howling wilderness of nothing....Well, bye-bye old world, I believe I have [had] enough of you!

offed themselves. The suicidal drive tends to run along family lines, but it has seldom been matched by the Briggs clan's prodigious output. They were a family which multiplied only in order to subtract.

HONORABLE MENTION

Manhattan medical student Robert J. White shot himself to death in August, 1907, using the same pearl-handled revolver his father and grandfather had used to kill themselves.

#13

M. Jay Briggs
IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR

There was little that was exceptional about the fact that M. Jay Briggs fastened a rope around his neck and hanged himself near his Connecticut farmhouse in October, 1901. The astonishing thing was that he was at least the twenty-first member of a family which for over fifty years had been methodically ending their own lives. His family tree was subject to overzealous self-pruning, and M. Jay had been one of the few remaining twigs, another notch in a withered stump of Briggslessness.

No one could explain the ancestral *Weltschmerz*, the genealogical death wish, but his patriarchs' genes seemed bit-mapped for self-extinction. One by one, they succumbed to the genocidal impulse like gnats splatting against a windshield. Briggs's sister shot herself. Another of his sisters dove into a pond and drowned. His older brother had hanged himself in a barn ten years previously. More than one woman who had married into the dour gene pool gave in to the mokey malaise and also

#14

Buddhist Monks
in Vietnam

EIGHTFOLD PATH TO LIGHTER FLUID

For sheer combusive pageantry, few suicides come close to the public self-immolations committed by a string of pacifistic human charcoal briquets in South Vietnam during the mid-sixties. If nothing else, the deaths of these yellow-robed baldies are admirable for the taut willpower necessary to incinerate oneself to the bone, to sit in an unruffled lotus position as flames curl around one's limbs.

The suicides came in two waves, first in '63 and again in '66, with at least nine monks and nuns dying each year. The first wave was in protest of the massacre of nine Buddhists by South Vietnamese government forces in the city of Hue. The government was at that time controlled by a small faction of Roman Catholics led by Ngo Dinh Diem, and the lurid displays of self-directed pyromania successfully led to

SUICIDE NOTE:

(Excerpt):

You know we have discussed the hereafter and many other things; also, you know we have made a pact that the first one to go would come back and talk to the other, if possible.

Now I am going to hold you to this pact. I will be dead long before you see this letter. I am not crazy, as everyone will say, but I am discouraged, as life does not hold very much for me since I came back [for] Christmas.

I didn't want to come back, but the folks wanted me to. I can't kick, though, because I have had twenty-three years of wonderful living. I had been, as you know, very interested in the future and just what it holds for me. I will be branded as every other suicide—crazy. Not so. I can wait no longer to find out. We will meet again in the fourth millennium.

HONORABLE MENTION

In 1881, after swallowing morphine and slashing his wrists, a spiritualist named Peter Gannon wrote a six-page letter as he sat down to die in New York's Central Park. He ended his note with a kiss-off that has become a part of popular culture.

SUICIDE NOTE:

...What little fear I did possess has been dissipated by the facts of spiritualism.... I almost hear men say, "What a fool to die." How do you know, you little atoms, groveling in the sand for jewels, groping in the darkness for the essence of light, searching in the haystack of selfishness and dissipation



Diem's ouster. The second wave was intended to bring the downfall of a subsequent government helmed by Nguyen Cao Ky, whom many Buddhists considered to be a hatchet man for the Americans. Ky later moved to Orange County, California, and the reader is free to decide whether that was sufficient punishment for his crimes.

The self-cremations were notable for their flagrant exhibitionism. Instead of torching themselves within cloistered monasteries, the sizzling celibates chose busy intersections, marketplaces, public squares, cathedrals, a university, and the government palace in Saigon. They'd appear out of nowhere, popping out of cars or jumping off bicycles, douse themselves with gasoline, sit with their legs folded, and strike a match. As the flames rose upward of twenty feet, sympathetic crowds gathered to egg the holy men on toward nirvana. While blood boiled, brains baked, and steaming guts burst open, cheering spectators formed rings around the martyrs to prevent fire crews from rescuing them. After the monks had been reduced to ash, firemen were finally allowed to scoop up the molten mendicants.

When depictions of the blazing street theater hit the TV news back in the States, it must have been an eye-popping spectacle for your average Ma and Pa Kettle, most of whom couldn't handle a sunburn. Out-gunned and out-funded, the Vietnamese won the war for one simple reason: They were bigger psychos than we were.



How did Dan Burros hate the Jews? Let me count the ways: He hated them in his letters, which he always signed "*Judah Verrecke*" ("Perish Judah"); he hated them in his conversations, which inevitably came around to his contention that "the Jews must suffer and suffer"; he hated them in his notebooks, which were filled with drawings of gas chambers and Jewish corpses; he hated them in his inventions, one of which was designed to electrocute Jews with piano wires when a person tickled the ivories; he hated them in his karate lessons, which he studied so he would be able to kill Jews with his bare hands; and he hated them in a bar of soap which he always carried with him, a bar which bore the label, "From the finest Jewish fat." Every vessel in his brain seemed part of a larger blueprint for Hebraic extinction. His stubby little heart was a vial of hatred for *das Juden*. He had an unrelenting odium for all things kosher. There was no doubt about it: Dan Burros hated Jews.

Only one problem—Dan Burros was Jewish.

For some inexplicable reason, he fancied himself a foot soldier in the war against Zionism. He liked the crisp feel of starched khakis, the strong odor of boot polish, the bristly abrasiveness of close-cropped hair, the sting of cold cologne on razor burn, the pinkish glow left by a rough soaping and piping-hot shower, the milky glint of clean fingernails, the tight pinch of snow-white underwear, the pert arrogance of erect male nipples—I think you get the idea.

His Nazi fervor was awakened in the fifth grade, when he began collecting German war souvenirs and brawling with students who disagreed with his right-wing viewpoints, reflexively stigmatizing his foes as "Jew bastards." He later became a member of the National Guard and was assigned in the late fifties to help integrate Southern schools. During his tenure in the Guard, he became disgusted at the sight of white girls being "pushed by soldiers with bayonets." He later spent two-and-a-half years in the Army, where his less-militant colleagues called him "Brown-nose Burros" and "Der Führer." He thrice attempted suicide while in the Army and thrice failed, at one point jotting a note where he lamented, "I had hoped to see the revival of National Socialism. I see now our cause is hopeless." He received an honorable discharge "...by reasons of unsuitability, character, and behavior disorder."

Burros became a printer, sketching Nazi figures during lunch breaks and telling people his parents were German. He started networking by mail with other Nazis, signing some of his letters "Hans Friedrich Borchers," the name of a German spy from the 1930s. He soon shackled up in the barracks of George Lincoln Rockwell's American Nazi Party, helping print Herr Rockwell's literature and in his spare time playing with a dog affectionately called Gas Chamber. But feeling stifled in his subservient role to Rockwell, Burros left the party in November, 1961, and headed for New York. He became editor of a magazine called *Kill!*, whose masthead declared it to be "...dedicated to the annihilation of the enemies of the white people." The first issue's lead article was "The Importance of Killing." Around this time he formed his own political organization, the American National Party, and briefly worked on another magazine, *The International Nazi Fascist*. He sometimes ranted on street corners and could be seen around town sporting a *Lee Harvey Oswald Fan Club* button.

In 1963, he was arrested on firearms charges for his involvement in the Bronx's White Tower Riots, where Burros and some friends tried to disrupt a civil-rights demonstration. He served only ten days, but after his release he grew disillusioned with overtly Nazified political groups. Instead, he found himself drawn to the Ku Klux Klan. When he attended a Delaware Klan rally in 1965, he felt as if he had come home. He rapidly ascended the Klan's ranks, receiving an honorary scarlet gown as New York's Grand Dragon and a card signifying him as New York's King Kleagle, the state's chief organizer. As



part of his duties, he screened applicants to make sure they weren't Jewish. He fell in love with a fellow white supremacist named Carol, and when he was especially cheerful, he'd let her wear his Klan robe. At twenty-eight, Dan was one happy racist.

On October 19, 1965, the *New York Times* listed Burros as a Klansman, a revelation which cost him his job but gave him an added sheen in the racist underworld. Ten days later, a *Times* reporter made an appointment to meet Burros in a Queens luncheonette. Dan seemed honored by all the attention until the reporter, who would later paint Burros as "a round, short, sallow man who looked like a small heap of misery," confronted him with an intriguing tidbit: Burros's parents were Jewish, and Dan himself had been bar-mitzvahed. Burros threatened to throw acid at the scribe and warned, "I'll have to retaliate, do you understand? If you publish that, I'll come and get you and I'll kill you. I don't care what happens. I'll be ruined. This is all I've got to live for." As they exited the luncheonette, the born-again reporter urged Burros to find Christ.

Dan fled to the Reading, Pennsylvania, home of Roy Frankhouser, a fellow Klansman. "I'm ruined," he shrieked to Frankhouser, "I'm finished. I've got to end it all. I'm going to go down and blow up the House Committee. I'm going to blow up the *New York Times*." He also threatened to kill President Johnson. Burros refused to tell Frankhouser exactly what the *Times* was going to print.

When the paper made no mention of Burros on Saturday, Dan was elated. He even slipped into his red robe for a while. Foot-odor jokes about a fellow Klansman kept the Frankhouser house mirthful that night.

The *Times* dropped the bomb on Sunday instead. Burros returned from the newsstand in a full sweat and ran up to Frankhouser's bedroom. Burros's repeated karate kicks failed to open Roy's gun closet, but it didn't matter—he spotted a .32-caliber revolver sitting on a dresser and grabbed it. "Roy, long live the white race. God bless you," Burros said as he walked into a living room while a Wagner record played in the background. "Long live the white race. I've got nothing more to live for," Burros said, and then shot himself in the chest. The bullet failed to kill him. "Man, I missed," said an exasperated

Suicide

Burros before sending a bullet into his right temple. He fell down dead, and a circle of blood spread out around his skull. It was Halloween. Dan Burros would never wear another costume.

#16

Chris Chubbuck

WHY DIDN'T REGIS AND KATHIE LEE THINK OF THIS?

Morning TV talk shows are usually a lackluster hodgepodge of show-biz gossip, regional fudge-baking competitions, and light aerobics for the lard-assed audience matrons. They act as video Valiums for frumpy housewives on a hegira between dropping the kids off at school and picking them up again. So when Chris Chubbuck, hostess of Sarasota, Florida's *Suncoast Digest*, shot her brains out on live TV, a hundred thousand half-eaten Pop Tarts probably fell into a hundred thousand shag carpets at once. It must have shocked the colonic polyps out of her curler-wearing contingent.



It was July 15, 1974, and Chubbuck, thirty, was struggling through the first day of the show's revised format, one which required her to read news before interviewing celebrities. She was reading a story about a gunfight in a bar when producers ran into technical difficulties with a film clip. When Chubbuck's face reappeared on screen, she recited these words: "In keeping with Channel 40's policy of bringing you the latest in blood and guts, and in living color, you are going to see another first—attempted suicide."

She then pulled out a .38-caliber revolver from a shopping bag and fired into her head. Cameras went black. In a few minutes, the station was airing an old movie.

This was a harmonic convergence of news happening and being reported within the same act. It was live television reaching its fullest potential—dead television. Unlike the cowardly Dave Garroway, who romped with a chimp on NBC's *Today* show but shot himself to death in private, Chubbuck showed the instincts of a real trouper. And yet the world spins on its crooked axis, bereft of a true talent while Joan Lunden and Bryant Gumbel prattle about gift ideas for Mother's Day.

#17

William Corcoran

HE WHO HESITATES

Perched atop a hundred-foot flagpole one bright day in May, 1975, William Corcoran knew he had made the right decision in choosing to end his life. No one seemed to care. He had his fill of emotional bruises, mild betrayals, the whole nattering jangle of human existence. Life was a bitter lime to suck.

But as he stared down at the unforgiving earth of Palmyra, New York, pondering how it would feel to shatter into a thousand pieces à la Humpty Dumpty, his life instinct arose like a swarm of bats fleeing a cave. Maybe the crowd which formed at the pole's base knew what it felt like to be lonely. And the fireman who was coming to save him seemed like a decent enough guy. Perhaps he could be a buddy, a shoulder to cry on, someone with whom to share a round of Michelobs and a handful of beer nuts. Yeah, this new feeling which blew through his soul felt pretty danged good. He would make a pact with God, agreeing to appreciate the twinkle in a child's eye, the soft curl of a woman's smile, the beneficent nod of an old man feeding pigeons.

But God would have none of it. As Corcoran was being rescued, he accidentally slipped and plummeted earthward, his indecisive frame smacking into the ground like a giant egg.

#18

Inocencia Rosa Cortes

ALRIGHT, MAYBE HE OVERREACTED

A cobbler's life is not as glamorous as one might think. Sure, we've all dreamed of repairing shoes for a living, but with the high prestige and dynamite salary comes a wearisome spiritual toll. One must endure an endless parade of corns, bunions, ingrown toenails, the ceaseless dye jobs, the stubborn scuff marks, the smell of unwashed feet, and the blunt come-ons of foot fetishists. And don't even mention galoshes. Lesser beings go into banking, law, or medicine.

It's common knowledge that it's easier to rehabilitate a child molester than to fix a pair of

badly worn shoes. So when a client entered Inocencia Rosa Cortes's Mexico City shoe-repair shop totting a pair of weather-beaten clodhoppers in September, 1947, Cortes did what any self-respecting shoemaker would do—he let out a uvula-wobbling wail, seized an awl, and plunged the small, pointed tool into his chest ten times.

HONORABLE MENTION

"You villain! You will certainly die with your shoes on!" screamed a London cobbler to his young apprentice during an argument in September, 1786. The berated boy was found to have hanged himself the next morning. Except for his bare feet, he was fully clothed.

HONORABLE MENTION

Other incidents of suicidal overreactions: Unable to decipher a complicated income-tax form, a Frenchman hanged himself in 1947 after saying, "I'd rather die than go through another day of this"; claiming to be depressed over the popularity of modern jazz, Roy Baker of Venice, California, took the gas route in 1921; Patrick Lynch, twenty-eight, ended it all in 1985 upon discovering that a termite had caused two hundred dollars' worth of damage in the London flat he had just rented; and Harvard freshman Barton Fay flipped the "OFF" switch in 1922, nauseated with the rampant use of eggs in campus-restaurant menus.

#19

Dennis & Lindsay Crosby

BING'S BOYS BITE THE BULLET

To a gullible world, Bing Crosby was a plaid-wearing, pipe-toking Everydad, a Norman Rockwell painting incarnate, an orange-juice-sipping smoothie whose dulcet tones massaged your innards like aural Ex-Lax. The National Father's Day Committee elected him "Hollywood's Most Typical Father of 1937," and *LIFE* magazine said he was "incontestably the No. 1 Big Family Man of Hollywood." Der Bingle emanated such snug-as-a-bug paternalism, he made everyone wish they had issued from his urethra.

In reality, the mush-mouthed crooner was a savage cocksucker whose heart was a dark cavern of icy stalactites. He may have given the world a "White Christmas," but his four sons by his first marriage suffered *Kristallnacht*. If they didn't put away their underwear, they were forced to wear it around their neck until they went to bed. If they couldn't master dance steps or sing a tune to Bing's satisfaction, he mercilessly insulted them in front of his celebrity friends. If they committed some particularly



Dennis "Ugly" Crosby.

grievous infraction, they were forced to endure the stony ministrations of pappy's metal-studded belt, which reddened their behinds until the first drop of blood appeared. Bing was indeed the Loch Ness father.

"We lived like four kids in a goddamned prison cell," Gary, the oldest of four Crosby brothers, once griped. In the late fifties, Gary teamed with brothers Phillip, Lindsay, and Dennis for an ill-fated nightclub act. The cowering quartet haplessly twittered and two-stepped their way into show-biz nothingness, falling into a mud pit of broken marriages and alcoholic debauchery. They sacked the act in 1959 after a fraternal free-for-all in a Montreal dressing room. Gary, whom Bing endearingly referred to as "Bucket Butt" and "Satchel Ass," got at least partial revenge against his despotic daddy by publishing the bitchy opus *Going My Own Way* in 1983.

Lindsay, whose oversized *tête* led Bing to call him "The Head," went on to star in low-budget celluloid stinkers such as *Free Grass* and *Bigfoot*. He was arrested numerous times for drunk driving and in 1982 suffered a nervous breakdown. Colorado sheriff's deputies busted him in '87 for sprinting naked around a motel swimming pool. In December, 1989, eleven days after being informed that his inheritance was depleted, the Crosby boy who was reportedly



Lindsay "The Head" Crosby.

Bing's favorite put a bullet through The Head. "I was happy to be who I was, even if I had the hell kicked out of me," Dennis Crosby, a k a "Ugly" and "Stupid," was once quoted as saying. Awash in booze problems, failed business ventures, two soured marriages, and five kids, Dennis erased that ugly puss with a twelve-gauge shotgun only seventeen months after Lindsay killed himself.

The double tragedy could have been prevented. The boys could have put their underwear away, sang on-key, and gotten those dance steps right, but noooooo....

#20

Ian Curtis
FACE THE MUSIC

The British group Joy Division, named after Nazi concentration-camp bordellos, were as colorful as a cement wall and half as rousing as a chest cold. Their sound was massively depressing: Guitars slashed like razors over Novocain bass lines, and drums smacked like a hundred Thorazines hitting a cold linoleum floor.



Over this dismal dirge-o-rama rose the sad little voice of Ian Curtis, who always sounded as if he was gargling from a phlegm-filled Dixie cup. His dispirited intonation made him sound twice his age of twenty-two, his lyrics a Binaca blast of numbed emotions: "I don't care anymore/I've lost the will to want more.... It's creeping up slowly/That last fatal hour." While the other band members boozed it up and dug into their fish 'n' chips, Ian would sit all alone, crying. Although he made it comically obvious how depressed he was, he never really let us in on what ultimate bum-out had destroyed him. Was it tummy trouble? Lithium deprivation? A flaccid pee-pee? Perhaps he might have been more sanguine had he been getting a little tookie on the side.

Rumored to be the odd man out in a love triangle, the whiny pipsqueak hanged himself in

his British home on May 18, 1980, only hours before Joy Division was scheduled to embark on their first US tour. Throughout the eighties, J.D.'s two albums inspired countless over-moussed neo-Goths to form their own bands. Certain misguided souls have come to view Curtis as a god, an elegiac martyr. Regrettably, most of them have failed to pursue their emulation to its logical extreme and hang themselves.

#21

Carl Czerny
THE RUBE GOLDBERG
OF SELF-DESTRUCTION

A frustrated Austrian inventor, Czerny ended his frustration with an invention that ended his life. Sixty years before Jack Kevorkian, he perfected a suicide machine and successfully tested it on himself.

Prior to effecting his own demise, Czerny had spent two harebrained decades developing a "Flying Flapper"—a motorized scooter rigged to birdlike wings which would place the miracle of flight within the average nudnik's hands. Czerny envisioned a New Age of human pterodactyls fluttering across the sky. He published *Der Schwingenflieger*, a monthly newsletter which served as the house organ of his "flap-flying club." Despite his enterprise's seeming improbability, he was said to have fashioned a prototype which actually worked. Several Austrian journals commended his efforts, but he failed to scrape together enough schillings to mass-market the device. "The fate of Austrian inventors," wrote the embittered father of flap-flying in July, 1929, "is the fate of typical Austrian stupidity—imposing monuments after neglect has brought them to the grave."

Five months after penning those words, Czerny burned the blueprints to his Flying Flapper and then finished work on his final invention. He fastened a string to a cork in his bedroom's gas piping. The string led to an alarm clock in which he had silenced the bell device. He tied the string to the revolving alarm mechanism, set the timer, and bade himself good night. At the appointed time, the clock quietly wound up the string, which pulled off the cork and filled the room with lethal fumes. Czerny died painlessly while he slept, flapping his way to the great aviary in the stars.

SUICIDE NOTE:

Do not look for plans. The secret of bird flight shall go with me to meet death. Amen.

HONORABLE MENTION

Using a device nearly identical to Czerny's, Wilfred Jeffrey of Wolverhampton, England, alarm-gassed himself in 1967.

HONORABLE MENTION

The hands of a Seattle engineer wrought an even more complex self-termination device in 1986, one which helped him commit "solarcide." He placed a photoelectric cell in his motel-room window, connecting it to a wire fastened to heating elements on his chest. When the sun rose over the Emerald City, its energy was transferred to the heating elements, which lit a firecracker. The firecracker triggered a gun, which fired a bullet into the clever man's breast.

#22

Jeffrey Davis
SPOOKED BY THE GOOKS

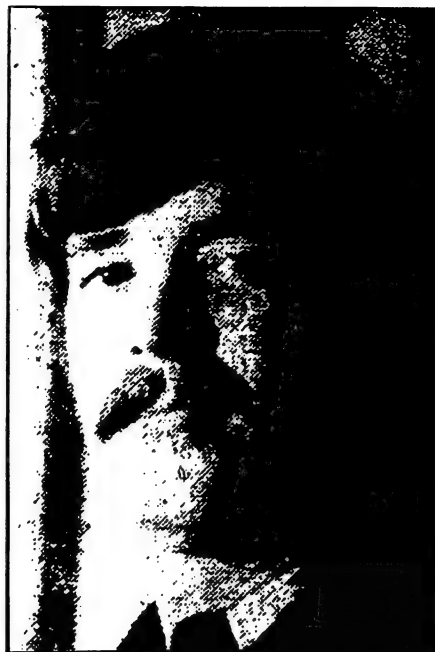
Jeff Davis was the sort of guy about whom Oliver Stone makes movies. A tormented Vietnam vet, he never forgot the night that Charlie Cong nearly wiped out his entire company, nor the next morning, when he surveyed his friends' bullet-strafed bodies floating in rice paddies. Neither could he shake his guilt over having killed an unarmed Vietnamese kid who he thought was carrying a bomb.

He returned to the States with a leg half-gimpy from shrapnel wounds and a chronic case of heebie-jeebies. When cars backfired, he dove for cover. Certain that they concealed snipers, he avoided hedges. Every night before sleeping, he barricaded his bedroom door with a chair. The choppers kept buzzing in his head.

Jeff spoke of nothing but Nam, Nam, Nam. He watched every episode of a PBS series on the war and sat through multiple screenings of *The Deer Hunter* and *Apocalypse Now*. His favorite tape was Billy Joel's *Goodnight Saigon*. When people asked him what he did during the war, his stock answer was, "I killed communists for Christ."

He could have spun pottery or whittled bird cages, but he instead chose to lead the martial existence of a D.C. cop, a veritable Travis Bickle who called himself a "garbage collector." Having placed his nuts on the line in Southeast Asia, he found himself weathering the taunts of anti-war protestors. The final insult came in 1984, when he visited his hometown of Port Arthur, Texas, only to find it transformed into a ghetto for Vietnamese immigrants. "I'm tired and I'm scared," he told his mother while pacing the floor. "Sometimes I get so down, I think I'm flipping my lid."

Two nights after flying back to D.C., he drove to the Vietnam Memorial, that evil black slab which bears the names of more than fifty-eight thousand dead soldiers. The names of the roughly one hundred and sixty men slain in Davis's company were up there among them. Drowning in Jim Beam, he sat down at a table and began sobbing. A fellow vet walked up and hugged him. "Welcome home, brother," he said. "Do you want to talk?" When Davis



ignored him, the spurned grunt walked away. Jeff then ambled over to an oak tree. Leaning back against the tree and facing the Memorial, he pulled out his service revolver. Then, amid the nocturnal mist, a thick blackness stretching back to that endless night in the rice paddies, he joined the rest of his company.

HONORABLE MENTION

Claiming in a 1986 letter sent to congressmen that "veterans are a forgotten group," Vietnam vet Michael Dean dosed his girlfriend and her three children with sleeping pills, sprinkled kerosene throughout his New Hampshire house, set it afire, and shot his loved ones before shooting himself.

HONORABLE MENTION

Seized by a flashback, former Green Beret Stanley Erwin Moody covered himself in blackface, put on combat gear, grabbed four guns, and staged a last stand in Florida's Ocala National Forest in 1982. He wounded a curious interloper, who he evidently thought was an attacking Cong soldier, and then committed suicide rather than be taken alive.

#23

Jeanine Deckers
THE SINGING NUN SINGS NO MORE

Dough-mi-neeka-neeka-neeka! The thrushlike tones were unavoidable in 1963, reverberating worldwide in a jubilant canticle to St. Dominic. The ethereal French lyrics seemingly floated from every turntable and radio speaker in

existence, topping the US charts and moving a million-and-a-half units. Once heard, the eminently hummable chorus latched onto the head like a million-and-a-half leeches. It was *Dough-mi-neeka-neeka-neeka*.

The woman behind the voice was Sister Luc-Gabrielle, a Dominican nun tucked away in a Belgian convent. She was also known as *Soeur Sourire* ("Sister Smile") in recognition of a sweet grin which brightened a face that otherwise would have caused paint to flake. The sex-starved guitar-picker was unaware that she was a pop star until 1966, when Debbie Reynolds portrayed her in *The Singing Nun*, a biopic which Sister Smile would label "absolutely idiotic." But the taste of fame had rattled the nun's faith and, finding the lure of leisure suits and mutual cunnilingus too strong, she left the convent that same year.

Sister Smile went back to calling herself Jeanine Deckers, the name she had been born with. But her celebrity soon went the way of her habit and penguin outfit. The Belgian government didn't care that she had donated all her record proceeds to charity. They nailed the ex-nun for a hundred and twenty thousand bucks in back taxes. Twenty years after *Dominique* first hit, the dykey songstress waxed an electro-boogie version of the tune, but it was met with screaming indifference. She was relegated to giving guitar lessons and playing in churches for free. "Life is a struggle," she told an acquaintance, "and I struggle."



In '83, she and her "companion" (heh, heh), a physical therapist named Anne Pecher, opened a center for autistic tots. Pecher, who looked like Mickey Dolenz, was also a fallen nun. The oyster-gobbling duo were unable to find financial backing for their charitable endeavor and soon backed out of it. In 1985, the squid-sucking friends were found dead in their apartment outside of Brussels, felled by guffuls of downers and booze. *Dough-mi-neeka-neeka-nothing*.

SUICIDE NOTE:

(Excerpt):

We hope God will welcome us. He saw us suffer.



#24 *The "Deer Hunter" Suicides* DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

This case calls to mind the question that mothers have asked their bratty offspring for years: "If Johnny Johnson shot himself in the head, would you do it, too?" As far as it concerned at least twenty-eight shit-brained simps, the answer was, "Yeah, Ma, 'cause it looked so awesome on TV!"

It centers around video and syndicated-television screenings of *The Deer Hunter*, a Vietnam epic starring Christopher Walken and Robert DeNiro as American servicemen. In the film's most memorable scene, Chris and Bob are forced to play Russian roulette for the amusement of Viet Cong soldiers. They emerge unscathed, but DeNiro later bumps into a heroin-zonked Walken in a Saigon gambling parlor. Instead of playing blackjack or an honest game of pinochle, Walken spins a revolver, points it to his head, and sprays grey matter all over the walls.

For a string of dunderheaded couch potatoes in the early eighties, this seemed an irresistibly romantic gesture. In November, 1981, two nights after viewing the film, a suburban Chicago tool-and-die maker named Ted Tolwinski came home drunk. He awoke his wife and led her into the kitchen, where they sat at a Formica table. Showing her a friend's revolver, he spun the cylinder as if it were the Wheel of Fortune and held the gun to his head. Click. He gave it another whirl. Click. Ted's wife tried to grab the gun, but he told her it was safe. One more spin. BOOM!

Two weeks after watching a 1980 cable broadcast of *The Deer Hunter* in Trenton, New Jersey, thirteen-year-old Freddy Saganowski placed a bullet in his dad's .38-caliber revolver and, without even bothering to spin the chamber, gave himself a lead injection.

Illinois plumber David Radnis had a spat with

his wife two nights after viewing the film. He got soused, invited some friends over, and blasted himself while his house guests watched.

The Deer Hunter was one of the first tapes to find its way into Illinois factory worker Brian Jackson's VCR. An Army vet, Jackson told his brother on a January morning in 1981 how he and his grunt buddies used to play Russian roulette in Germany. Waxing nostalgic, he fetched a hollowpoint bullet, fed it into his Colt .357 Magnum revolver, and spirited himself away to a celestial boot camp.

What mindless obeisance to the cathode-ray tube these four humans (and an estimated twenty-four others) displayed! Their stiff corpses serve as repugnant examples of those who can only live by imitation. After all, it was only a movie. And they were only stupid.

#25 *Giuseppe Dolce* STEAMROLLER BLUES

An unexceptional worker ant, a dutiful wage slave who neither pissed nor moaned about his spine-wrenching duties, Giuseppe Dolce blended into his workplace like beige carpet in an office building. He was a model laborer who punched in, did his job, bothered no one, and punched out. A young stonemason from a northern Italian village, Dolce found employment with a French road crew during World War II. His bosses were thrilled at the dedication with which he hauled rocks, spread tar, and mended blown-out roads along the Riviera.

His co-workers tolerated the husky, olive-skinned prole well enough, but he struck them as a bit unreachable. He lived alone in a tottery mobile home which he drove from one job site to the next. He had no family to speak of, no seeming need for male companionship, no obvious lust for women, no apparent vices. When

the boys went out to eat or drink, Giuseppe stayed in his little wigwam. He seemed devoid of interests.

That all changed in 1944, when he was assigned to drive the company's steamroller. His Latin libido instantly straddled onto the machine's cruel destructiveness. He fell head-over-heels for its steady, inflexible power, its insuperable brawn, the way it crept along like a giant conquering snail. It seemed like the only thing that busted his nuts was sitting in the vehicle's vibrating chair, popping the clutch, and letting his war machine roll. He would sometimes dismount and watch it forge slowly on, staring agog as it trampled everything underfoot. When each work day ended, Giuseppe would park the steamroller outside his mobile home, where he'd polish it with the same care that a mother powders and diapers her baby. "He always seemed alone when he was with us," a co-worker would say, "alone with his steamroller."

The infatuation lasted three years. One afternoon late in 1947, a member of the road crew noticed that Giuseppe was idly gazing at his beloved steel behemoth. "Well, Giuseppe," he asked, "what are you doing there?"

"Nothing," came the distant response. "Just thinking. Wondering what would happen if nobody could stop this thing. This one and all the others, just rolling on forever." The worker shrugged and walked away. He was fifty yards down the road when he noticed the unmanned steamroller crawling up behind him. Its rollers, normally white, were coated with wide red slicks. "Come quick, Papal!" a girl was screaming. "Monsieur bleeds!" The worker ran back to find Dolce as flat as a pizza crust. Giuseppe had evidently prostrated himself on the road and surrendered to that slow, inviolable wheel. After a prolonged courtship, he had finally consummated his love.

HONORABLE MENTION

George Perks, an ironworker from Birmingham, England, was hypnotized as he watched a steamroller come toward him one night in 1877. Proclaiming, "Where that goes, I will follow," he flung himself in its path and let the love roll all over him.

#26 *The "Dungeons and Dragons" Suicides* REVENGE OF THE NERDS

Ten years ago, the major geek craze was a

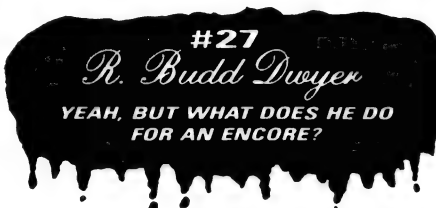
SUICIDE

Tolkienesque fantasy game known among the faithful as "D&D." Pale, acne-scarred, four-eyed, bow-tied, Mensa/Trekkie types couldn't get enough of it, for when they huddled their atrophied frames around a table and began to play, they assumed the form of wizards, Huns, swashbucklers, thunder gods, warlocks, and Herculean giant-killers. For socially hopeless ectomorphs, it provided a potent escape from the dead hum of computers, calculators, and fluorescent lights, the bloodless stacks of books and dot-matrix printouts.

The only hitch was that Dungeons and Dragons is a game of chance, and one's character sometimes *dies*. To go from megawimp to Conan the Barbarian and back to a ninety-pound wet noodle within a few rolls of the dice can be too much for a fragile egghead to handle. The National Coalition on Television Violence linked fifty-one suicides to the game from 1979 to 1985. Among those alleged to be D&D-related was the 1979 disappearance and suicide of James Dallas Egbert III, a sixteen-year-old Michigan State University super-brain who reportedly wandered off in a funk due to dashed D&D fortunes. In 1982, sixteen-year-old Virginia whiz kid Irving Lee "Bink" Pulling II shot himself in the heart after another player had placed a curse on him. Pulling had scrawled "LIFE IS A JOKE" on a school blackboard shortly before his suicide. Bink's mom went on to form an organization called B.A.D.D. (Bothered About Dungeons and Dragons). The mother of Michael Dempsey, fifteen, was puzzled when her son placed a hex on her during a simple game of backgammon. She blamed his subsequent suicide on D&D dependency.

The religious right was soon blaming Dungeons and Dragons on an international Satanic conspiracy, charging that its medieval hobgoblin imagery was thinly veiled devil worship. "It is another of Satan's ploys to pollute and destroy our children's minds," squalled a parent in Connecticut, where D&D devotee Roland Cartier had hanged himself. "I can feel the devil right here in the media center," shivered a woman in Heber City, Utah, a town which later voted to ban D&D in its schools.

B.A.D.D. founder Pat Pulling excoriated a game manual which featured "detailed descriptions of killing, Satanic human sacrifice, assassination, sadism, premeditated murder, and curses of insanity." A concerned physician warned that "there is hardly a game in which the players do not indulge in murder, arson, torture, rape, or highway robbery." The Christian Information Council likewise inveighed against the game, threatening that it can "desensitize players to murder, suicide, rape, torture, robbery, the occult, or any other immoral or illegal act." I realize that their hearts are probably in the right place, but do they have to make the fucking thing sound like so much *fun*?



Most people go gently into that good night, ignominiously withering away in their sleep or stuffed with tubes in a hospital bed. They end their lives with the same thudding mediocrity that they lived them.

Not Budd Dwyer, the king of public-relations suicides. You only *wish* you could die as gloriously as he did. A politician by trade, he couldn't deny his vocation's innate exhibitionist tendencies. On January 22, 1987, a day before he was to be sentenced for a bribery conviction, the cholesterol-stoked Pennsylvania State Treasurer summoned a press conference. He then blasted his dome while the TV cameras rolled, ensuring that his death would be enjoyed by generations to come. What chrome-plated balls. Hail Budd Dwyer!

His stunning curtain call started when a jury found him guilty of awarding a \$4.6-million contract to a California computer firm in exchange for a three-hundred-thousand-dollar kickback. Although the deal never went through, Dwyer faced a possible fifty-five-year sentence. Maintaining his innocence, Dwyer

delivered thirty minutes of aimless declamations in front of news reporters, claiming that friends had likened him to a "modern-day Job" and that his imprisonment would be "an American gulag." He was as white as Casper the Friendly Ghost after soliloquizing, his beige skull soaked in sweat under the hot lights.

After handing out some sealed letters to his aides, he reached into a manila envelope and pulled out a blued-steel .357 Magnum revolver. "Please leave the room if this will affect you," he calmly exclaimed amid cries of "Budd! Don't do this! ... Budd, listen to me!" Before anyone could wrest the gun away from him, he shoved the barrel in his mouth and tripped the hammer, knocking himself back against the Pennsylvania state flag and onto the floor. The blood streamed from his nose like water from a faucet.

The video cameras, of course, zoomed in on his plasma-smeared face. Horrified yelps of "Oh, my God!" and "Holy shit!" spiraled above the sound of clicking shutters. "Don't panic," beseeched an oily middle-aged man, holding out his palms and stepping in front of Budd's bulk. "Don't panic. Someone call the ambulance and a doctor and the police. Don't panic, please. Show a little decorum, please. Dear God in heaven. Alright, you've got your footage. Would you kindly wrap up your footage, get your cameras out—please get out of the room. You've got everything that can be gotten at this point. Please. Paul, please. Paul, please! Please, wrap up your cameras and get out of the room. Oh, my God in heaven. Dear God in heaven. Please, Paul, please! That's enough! That's enough! Please leave the room now!" Cameramen *finally* turned off their videocams and virtually flew back to their TV stations with the gruesome images. Dwyer's suicide was replayed nationally, with most broadcasters having the "decorum" to stop the tape after Budd whipped out his gun. But Philadelphia's WPVI-TV and WPXI-TV in Pittsburgh were bold enough to let the video wind down to its crimson conclusion. A television commentator would later call Dwyer's final act the "Super Bowl of suicides."

Tasteless or not, it was undeniably a dazzling gesture, much more sweeping than anything Dwyer could have done as the Keystone State's chief bean counter. Rather than rot away in the pen with fifty dicks up his ass, he went out blazing, theatrically, on *his* terms. We love you, Budd Dwyer. We honestly love you.



In 1878, a man named George W. Burleigh handed out flyers advertising that he would culminate his lecture at Chicago's Thornton Hall by shooting himself. Naturally, he packed the auditorium to the rafters. After an impressive oratory, he pulled out a large-caliber derringer and tore his head open with one shot. The crowd undoubtedly left feeling that their one-dollar admission price had been worth every penny.





#28

Sergei Esenin

HE RAN OUT OF INK

Poetry is useless, and poets even more so. They display a sickening level of self-immersion, a maudlin self-loathing unconsciously spurred by their inability to throw together a decent sentence. They are praised for being ineffectual, lauded for their inability to survive. If someone walked up to me and began tittering in iambic pentameter, I'd thrash them until they pissed blood.

I suppose it's a tolerable vocation for females, but for a man to wax rhapsodic about Grecian urns and waterlilies bespeaks a set of cherry-sized testicles. Sergei Esenin was that type of guy, a self-appointed tragic figure who believed that being a writer gave him the license to be a drunken asshole who leaves lousy tips. For a time he was the most popular poet in Russia, that land of bracing cold and women who look like Mike Ditka. The soused Slav churned out bland metrical screeds, most of which described how great it was to be Russian.

He was married for a short while to snake-dancing earth mother Isadora Duncan. Together they toured Europe and the States, she a bloated Susan Sarandon, he a vodka-guzzling Ryan O'Neal. Their brief union was characterized by shattered crockery and Isadora's black eyes. Duncan was later to meet her own comic demise when her scarf got caught in the spokes of a car's wheel.

Esenin had better things to fixate upon than Isadora, chief among them his own mortality, which seemed to be a lifelong hang-up. "I am tired of life in my native land," he wrote in 1916. A year later he quaffed some poison after someone insulted him, surviving with nothing but a burnt mouth to show for it. "I can't imagine what's the matter with me," he confided in a letter to a friend, "but if things continue in this fashion, I'll kill myself. I'll hurl myself from my window and smash myself to pieces...." While in New York with Isadora, he spoke of jumping from the Woolworth Building as he clutched his last poem. Vacationing in Berlin, he stood on his hotel-room's window ledge, taunting Duncan with threats that he'd jump. At a Parisian dinner party thrown by his long-suffering spouse, he unsuccessfully hanged himself from a lamp, greatly amusing the assembled guests. "God!" he wrote to a friend in the spring of '23, "I could even hang myself from such loneliness." He tried to slit his wrists in 1924 and subsequently slashed himself with glass, prostrated himself on train tracks, jumped from windows, and stabbed himself, all to no avail. "I am tired of it all," he told a friend in 1925. So are we, Sergei, get on with it, already!

He was committed to a Moscow psychiatric clinic in November, 1925, checking himself out four days before Christmas and immediately going on a drunken bender. With the intent of turning over a new leaf, he moved to Leningrad on December 23. "Life is a cheap but necessary



Esenin's open-casket funeral. A distant ancestor of rock star Prince looks on.

thing," he told a friend on the day after Christmas. He wrote his last poem early the next morning and handed it to his friend Elizaveta Ustinova, telling her to read it when alone. She came around knocking for Esenin on the morning of December 28, only to find him hanging from a rope he had thrown over a heating pipe. She finally read the poem, which she realized to be a suicide note. Esenin had written it in his own blood.

SUICIDE NOTE:

Goodbye, my friend, goodbye.
My dear, you are in my heart.
Predestined separation
Promises a future meeting.

Goodbye, my friend, without handshake
and words,
Do not grieve and sadden your brow—
In this life there's nothing new
in dying
But nor, of course, is living any newer.

HONORABLE MENTION

A Russian suicide club formed in Esenin's honor, claiming thirteen victims in the Urals by the end of 1928.

#29

Donald C. Forrester

I AM IRON MAN

Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble. Within the three-foot-deep cauldron seethed melted iron heated to a flesh-evaporating twenty-six

hundred degrees Fahrenheit. It was a breezy Thursday afternoon in October, 1967, and workers at San Francisco's Pacific Foundry Company were savoring their lunch hour, perhaps chewing on ham sandwiches, playing checkers, and ogling low-grade beaver mags. A spectral figure, his face oddly resembling the hue and texture of oatmeal, suddenly appeared in the plant. He quietly walked over to a platform suspended above the vat of boiling iron. He paced back and forth for a few moments, then stepped into the liquid metal as calmly as if he were sliding into a hot tub. Despite what must have been soul-cauterizing pain, witnesses said that the man emitted nary a chirp or cluck as he descended into the molten mass.

A murderously hot silvery spray blasted outward in a thirty-foot radius. Astonished workers frantically skedaddled to switch off the heat. After the smoke cleared, all that could be retrieved of the mysterious oatmeal man were a few scattered bone chips.

As investigators began to piece together the facts, they deduced that the man who self-scorified had only minutes earlier attempted to drown himself in a parked truck filled with liquid cement. Workers yanked him from the gushy concrete, only to be met with a reprimand: "Leave me alone—I'm trying to make an impression." It was thought that he walked directly from the truck to the iron foundry, the drying concrete accounting for his crusty veneer.

When the mother of twenty-eight-year-old unemployed barber Donald C. Forrester reported her son missing, police showed photos to foundry workers, who positively identified him. Forrester's mom had been living with Don for two months after becoming concerned when he sent her a string of deliriously religious letters, one of which contained Donald's assertion that he was "the true Christ."

SUICIDE

HONORABLE MENTION

A segment of charred vertebrae was all that could be salvaged of George Towler after he threw himself in a furnace filled with fifty tons of liquefied metal at the Farnley Ironworks near Leeds, England, in 1854.

#30 *The "Gloomy Sunday" Suicides* BLAME IT ON THE HUNGARIAN DEATH TANGO

Enemies of free speech have always argued that an unfettered First Amendment ignores the easy suggestibility of the great unwashed herd. The human mind, according to their contention, is a malleable emotive organ more easily impressed by potent images than linear logic. Certain topics, they say, are so inherently disturbing that they bypass one's reasoning and work their destructive powers directly on the heart.

A suicide cluster which emerged from Hungary in the mid-1930s would seem to bolster their case. A grim tango called "Gloomy Sunday" was said to have fatally unhinged at least eighteen discomfited Magyars. More than a few victims were found with the record still spinning on their turntables. Written in 1933, the song moved in on the listener like a low-lying fog, a pale blue cloud in which several frail beings lost themselves. The song's narrator grieves over a recently departed lover ("Angels have no thought of ever returning you") and ponders whether suicide could effect a rapprochement. ("Would they be angry if I thought of joining you?") The song finishes with the words, "My heart and I have decided to end it all." A snifter's worth of the dismal lyrics proved so lethal, Hungarian officials banned the draught entirely in 1936.

Several English-language versions of "Gloomy Sunday" were released in America, where it was marketed as "The Famous Hungarian Suicide Song." The tune was connected to at least two suicides in the States: Thirteen-year-old Floyd Hamilton, Jr., of Michigan hanged himself in April, 1936, leaving the lyrics to "Gloomy Sunday" in his pocket. In June of that year, William Hamilton Mitchell huffed a fatal dose of carbon monoxide in Seattle. His pocket, too, contained a copy of the lyrics.

Rezsoe Seres, the song's composer, report-

edly spent the rest of his life in a depression because he was never able to crank out a follow-up smash. In 1968, he leapt to his death from a tiny Budapest apartment.

#31 *James Green* A LEG UP ON THE OTHERS

Are the disabled immune from ridicule? Does humor miss the mark when it aims at easy targets? Should someone be punished if they poke fun at the afflicted without sharing their affliction? Is it wrong to boot someone in the teeth as they squirm helplessly on the ground?

FUCK, NO! If you sincerely believe that crippled people are no different than the rest of us, you'd do well to quit patronizing them. Just because they vainly clutch at phantom limbs doesn't mean they didn't cry at the end of *Terms of Endearment*. They're human beings, and as such, they deserve the same abuse everyone else does. Colostomy bags aren't hilarious? Full-blown palsy isn't fun to watch? Are you going to sit there and tell me you've never purposely given a blind person the wrong directions? Fuck the disabled! If some paralytic vents his bitterness at you, roll his wheelchair into traffic. If some cripple pops shit at you, knock his goddamned crutches out from under him. What's he gonna do? *Beat you up?*

Although James Green was fitted with a wooden leg, he was an anthropoid like the rest of us. He limped around New York's five boroughs like Captain Ahab, leaving a trail of bad memories and tiny splinters. In 1974, when the errant amputee set fire to his Brooklyn apartment, police treated him no differently than they'd treat a two-legged criminal—they threw him in the clink. Having reached his limit, the stumpy felon removed that Louisville Slugger of his, jammed it between the cell bars, wrapped its connective straps around his neck, and hanged himself. The peg-legged pyromaniac's earlier act of arson may have itself been a veiled suicide attempt, given the fact that his leg was a virtual Duraflame log.

HONORABLE MENTION

When British citizen David Hudson self-immolated with flaming paraffin in 1970, he hid a suicide note inside his prosthetic leg.

#32 *Charles Haefner* BREWED WITH THE FINEST MALT, BARLEY, AND HOPS

Beer. Charles Haefner couldn't get away from it. During the day, he toiled in a Manhattan white-beer brewery. He went home and drank beer all night, pissed it away, and returned in the morning to make more beer. By the time he reached thirty, his body was probably ninety-five percent beer.

But all the beer in the world couldn't fix what ailed (or, pardon the pun, "aled") him. He was far away from his native Deutschland, with only a cup of grog to warm his soul. He sat brooding every night, sipping at the Nectar of the Lumpen.

One frosty day in January, 1866, he paid off all his debts to his landlord, walked across the street to the brewery, and headed for a vat in which beer was brewing. He stepped into the gleaming copper kettle, lowering himself into the stewing mash, which scalded his skin on contact. The troubled Teuton stood implacably within the gurgling brew, displaying the imperturbability peculiar to his lineage. In the face of blistering pain, he neither flapped about nor tried to exit the boiling kettle. Having heard a lung-popping scream, workers ran in Haefner's direction. They pulled him from the vat, but by that time his lower body was pretty much stewed chicken. The hooch-guzzling Kraut died of burns received while being boiled in brewski.

HONORABLE MENTION

The owner of a brewery near the famous Czechoslovakian beer-making village of Pilsen, dejected because of lagging sales, leapt into his own Pilsner on June 21, 1932. In a suicide note, he pledged to haunt customers who had abandoned him.

HONORABLE MENTION

Also despondent because of a dip in revenues, St. Louis brewery owner William J. Lemp shot himself in his office on December 29, 1922.

HONORABLE MENTION

In 1932, Benjamin Natkins, a founder of Nedick's, Inc., drowned after diving into fifty gallons of vinegar in Morristown, New Jersey.

#33

William Gordon Hall

DRILLER KILLER

Holy, holy, holy. Auto-trepanation, the practice of boring a hole in one's head as a means of self-illumination, can be traced back almost to the days of the woolly mammoth. Since it's painful, senseless, and tailor-made for the atavistically naive, you can bet your nipple rings that the Beautiful People's skulls will soon look like wiffle balls.

Bill Hall, a fifty-seven-year-old Belfast executive, took a less affected but more decisive path to enlightenment in March, 1971. Unlike the fashion trepanationists, who chisel through their crania yet leave the soft brain matter untouched, Hall seized a portable power drill and sent the twirling steel bit deep into his head eight times. Now, burrowing into your own head once seems brazen enough, but Hall's seven additional excavations command quiet respect. A hastily summoned surgical team tried without success to plug holes in Hall's mind, which by that time had become the proverbial sieve.



PHIL CISCO

HONORABLE MENTION

Seventy-one-year-old carpenter Joey Boothroyde of Chichester, England, made a fatal puncture wound in his heart with an electric drill in 1987.

#34

Ernest Hemingway

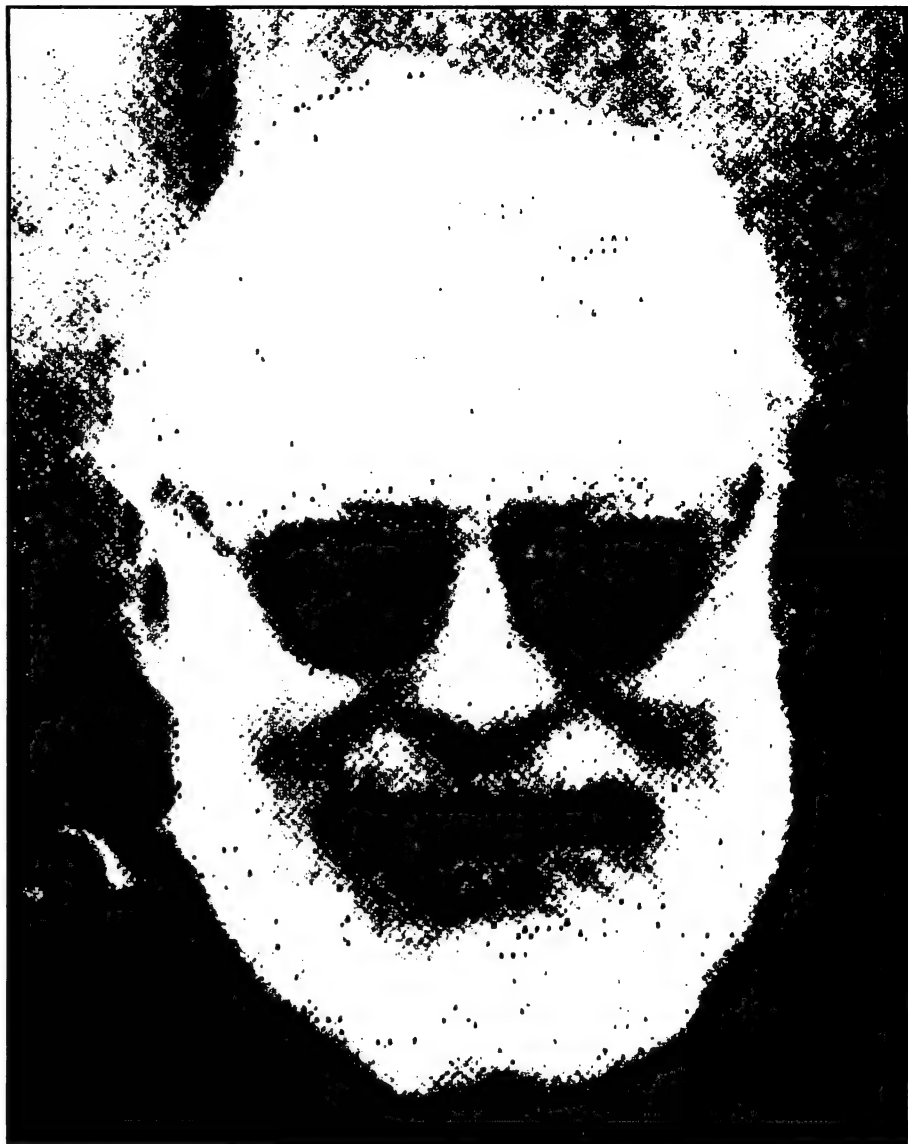
FOR WHOM THE SHOTGUN BLOWS

"Papa" Hemingway bit into life as if it were a big bloody burrito. He merrily bulldozed his way through this world like Santa Claus with a painful case of priapism. He was so cartoonishly macho, it's easy to picture him chewing off his own umbilical cord when he was born.

Perhaps uncomfortable with the implied effeminacy of his role as a literary luminary, Hemingway "proved" his mettle by drinking, hunting, lion-taming, deep-sea fishing, and boxing indigenous Third World peoples. He savored the hemorrhaging spectacle of a good bullfight. He chased poontang like a cat cornering a cockroach. To his credit, he threatened writers and assaulted photographers. When his leg was ripped open by mortar fire during World War I, Hemingway relished the experience as one might enjoy a strawberry dipped in Kool Whip. In 1954, when two flaming plane crashes within two days left him with burns, a concussion, a ruptured kidney, and double vision, he walked out of the African jungle swilling rotgut liquor and laughing at premature obituaries.

His scrotal gusto was so pronounced, it bordered on a death wish. He once told a German journalist that death was "just another whore." He was fond of saying that "man can be destroyed but not defeated." While hunting with friends in 1932, he casually mentioned that he'd kill himself "if it came to that." He gave another friend an unsolicited demonstration of how to point a shotgun at yourself and trip the trigger with your toe. He entered into a playful suicide pact with a woman named Clara Spiegel in 1939. His novel *Islands in the Stream* even featured a character named "Suicides."

But by the late fifties, as he wandered about his home in Idaho munching on peanut-butter-and-onion sandwiches, friends noticed that Big Ernie was getting a bit loopy. His ruddy complexion was gone. His once-beefy arms and legs were reduced to celery sticks. He was certain that his house and car were bugged by federal agents. He suspected that people were tampering with his mail. He was sure that he'd be jailed for income-tax evasion and corrupting the morals of a minor, crimes which he hadn't committed and of which no one suspected him. He accused all his friends of accepting bribes to testify against him. He charged one of them with trying to run him over with a car. He kept looking over his shoulder, afraid that G-men were tailing him.



Doctors at Minnesota's Mayo Clinic diagnosed him as "depressive-persecutory" in November, 1960, but ain't that what you'd expect undercover FBI agents to say? Shrinks jolted him with at least eleven electroshock treatments, deepening his misery by blowing out his memory and thus crippling his writing ability. "It was a brilliant cure," he told a visitor, "but we lost the patient."

He returned from the funny farm with his suicidal urge strengthened. One morning in April of 1961, his wife Mary caught him in the vestibule holding a shotgun and two shells, gazing dreamily out the window at the Sawtooth Mountains. A charter plane was readied to wing Ernie back to Mayo. As his party was leaving for the plane, he told them he had forgotten something back in the house. He dashed inside, bolted the door, and headed for the gun rack. A friend ran in through another door, found him loading a shell into his shotgun, and tackled him, prying the weapon from his hands. The next day, a heavily sedated Hemingway was placed in the charter plane. While aloft, he tried to open the cabin door and leap. A friend gave him another injection of sedatives. When the plane made a pit stop in

Wyoming after engine difficulty, Hemingway attempted to walk into another plane's whirling propellers but was restrained. After his charter was once more aflight, he again tried to bail out.

He received more electrical jump-starts at the clinic, almost entirely wiping out his ability to concentrate. When a visiting friend asked him why he wanted to kill himself, he replied with desperate passion: "What do you think happens to a man going on sixty-two when he realizes that he can never write the books and stories he promised himself? Or do any of the other things he promised himself in the good days?... If I can't exist on my own terms, then existence is impossible. Do you understand? That is how I've lived, and that is how I *must* live or not live."

At the height of his powers, Hemingway invented a spare, nonadjectival prose style from which American writers have never fully recovered. When it came time to kill himself, he did it in the same blunt, inelegant manner in which he wrote. After his second discharge from the Mayo Clinic, he and his wife took a scenic, unhurried drive back to Idaho, notable mainly for Hemingway's paranoia that the police would arrest him for transporting alcohol. The couple had a pleasant dinner upon arriving

home, after which Papa joined Mary in singing "Tutti Mi Chiamano Bionda" ("Everyone Calls Me Blond"). The next morning, July 2, 1961, he tiptoed down to the gun rack in his red robe while Mary slept, grabbed a silver-inlayed double-barreled Boss shotgun, and blew most of his head clean off his shoulders. Only his chin, mouth, and vestigial scraps of his cheeks were still connected to his body. Having spent years with his teeth buried in life's jugular vein, Hemingway finally turned and bit off his own head.

HONORABLE MENTION

Ernest's father, Dr. Clarence Hemingway, shot himself with a Smith & Wesson revolver in December, 1928. In a morbid stroke of foreshadowing, he had given Ernest a shotgun for his twelfth birthday.

HONORABLE MENTION

Ernest's brother Leicester, author of *My Brother, Ernest Hemingway*, killed himself with a borrowed handgun in September, 1982.

#35 Ann Hemmingway KILLED BY REDDY KILOWATT?

Utility companies are evil monopolies, gouging consumers with unexplained tolls, levies, taxes, fees, and one-time-only charges. They are impenetrable corporate colossi, vampirizing common citizens with the icy calculation of crack peddlers. They are run by men with the hearts of termites, men whose sharp mandibles gnaw into our very souls.

Ann Hemmingway knew this, and it broke her moldy little heart. A sixty-nine-year-old British widow who lived alone and therefore had to fend with the East Midlands Electricity Board all by herself, she found herself lost in the bureaucracy, a helpless cog in the machinery which squashes us all. In 1971, the unfeeling energy consortium decided to punish its minions for allowing their power bills to accrue over extended periods. It instituted a practice of sending customers overestimated bills as a way to frighten them into having their meters read more often. Mrs. Hemmingway, for instance, hadn't received a meter reading for a year-and-a-half. The electric company sent the post-menopausal energy consumer a bill for eighteen-and-a-half pounds (about twenty-nine bucks at current exchange rates). Startled and feeling more than a little betrayed, Mrs. Hemmingway confided to a neighbor that the bill was a source of nearly unconquerable anguish. A coroner would later rule that the exorbitant pecuniary obligation was the root

cause of Mrs. Hemmingway's suicide. As the tender old biddy began to decompose under six feet of soil, a clerk was finally sent to Hemmingway's former residence in order to get an accurate meter reading. It seems that they had overstated the old lady's debt, for she had in fact owed them less than two dollars.

HONORABLE MENTION

In 1972, London resident Joyce Cooper leapt seventeen stories to her death from atop the North Sea gas company's office building after experiencing problems at home with her gas service.

#36 Andrew L. Hermann NOW THAT'S METHOD ACTING!

Dick Shawn was a gifted comedian known for his prolonged improvisational outbursts. When he dropped dead of heart failure in the midst of a performance, people thought he was doing schtick. When the laughter died, people realized that Dick had, too.

Andy Hermann was a fledgling jokester, a madcap teen who never got a chance to play the big clubs. He was the eager-beaver little brother of Stephen Hermann, a student at



Hampshire College in Massachusetts. Andy planned to follow his older sibling into Hampshire as soon as he graduated from high school.

He liked to visit his big brother on campus, and Stephen gave him a chance to flex his comedic chops with an appearance on the school's closed-circuit student TV program, *Voice of the Top Two*. The show seemed an ideal forum for Andy's irreverent humor, as it once featured a nutty segment where students pretended to be Arabs and hijacked the proceedings. Everyone agreed that it was a knee-slapping moment.

Andy's fifteen minutes of infamy came in April, 1986, when he performed a skit he had written specifically for the program. His presentation was beamed live to students in dorm rooms at the tiny institute of higher learning. With mock-seriousness, he read a litany of grievances against the school, saying he was willing to die in protest of administrative inequities.

"Now I'm going to join my brothers," Andy announced as the speech ended, "and drink cyanide-impregnated Kool-Aid." He then chugged down half of the contents in a beer mug and brought in some supporting players to sing a spoof of the National Anthem. Going along with the gag, the other actors hauled Andy's body into the control room, giggling as he writhed and gasped for air. What a cutup, that Andy. The show's student producer entered the room and asked what had happened. "He drank cyanide," someone said amid guffaws. Not one to avoid shenanigans, the producer helped another student tote Andy's now-limp mass into the hallway. As time passed, everyone deserted the area after tiring of Andy's refusal to break character. They weren't aware that the "cyanide-impregnated Kool-Aid" was exactly that. It wasn't until later, when campus security guards discovered the lifeless scamp, that people realized Andrew Hermann's final joke was told at his own expense.

#37

Dr. Albert Herschman
HELL OF A TIME TO START A DIARY

When one decides that life is no longer interesting, that one has run through every sensation like multiple readings of a bad script, death sits brightly in a corner, the only unopened package. As with one's first kiss, haircut, or jail sentence, it shines like virgin snow waiting to be trampled. That moment of epiphany, the willful locking of horns with a potentially hostile unknown, is the spermy genesis of creativity.

And so it was that Dr. Albert Herschman, who had never jotted down a noteworthy phrase in his life, lifted a pen and began to describe his imminent death. An Austrian consular agent living in Milwaukee, Herschman in 1922 resolved that his time had come. He had his share of friends and success, but a recent spate of setbacks tugged at his stomach like an anchor. Surrounded by the familiar comforts of

his downtown office, he swallowed three half-grain morphine tablets with a glass of water. With typically clinical Austrian detachment, he then used a pen and paper to record how it felt to stroll calmly into oblivion.

SUICIDE NOTE:

(Excerpts):

Life is nothing but a streetcar ride; when you come to your station you get off.... The morphine has put me into a condition of absolute mental painlessness. I am not attempting to review my past life and do not try to look into the future, as I believe that death is the end and that there is no hereafter. I deeply regret the grief my voluntary parting must bring for a time on my beloved ones. Ill health, however, and late reverses make my step desirable.

It is now 7:17 p.m., and if I didn't know that I have taken sufficient poison to warrant results, I could not notice it from my condition. Aside from fluttering heart action and contracted eye pupils and moderate drowsiness, I feel no results. Still, I cannot make up my mind to swallow the cyanide and have lit a cigar, awaiting further increases of drowsiness, and hope to soon be able to coax me into the inevitable.

7:42 p.m.—I am here yet, hesitating to take this cyanide. My thoughts become blurred from the morphine, and a sensation of supreme quietude reigns in me. If it was not for my beloved wife, who just phoned, I would go on waiting, but I am afraid of too long a delay, because a lapsing into unconsciousness might result in [my] being saved by medical assistance. Ten more minutes and then the end by cyanide.

I am in no manner kept in suspense, just pleasantly and curiously watching developments. Queer enough, my only wish is [that] I had an additional handkerchief so that I could dispose of the surplus perspiration, it being close and my skin clammy from the morphine effects.

—Dr. A.J.H.

HONORABLE MENTION

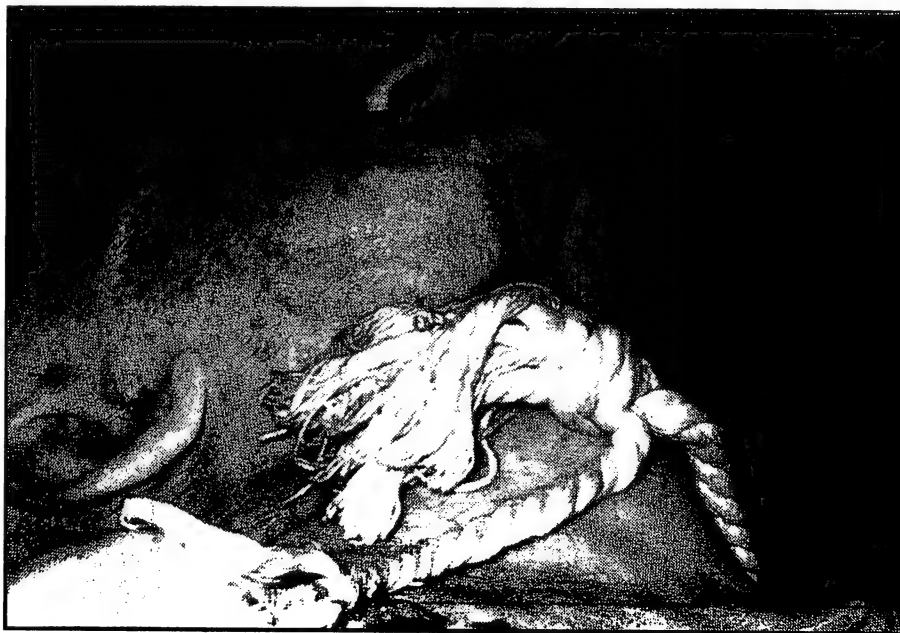
Despondent over the fact that his brother had stolen his wife, Andrew Keller of Newark, New Jersey, described death's onset while inhaling kitchen gas one night in April, 1930:

SUICIDE NOTE:

It is now 11:16 p.m., and I have finished my letters, so [I] will read for about an hour or so until everyone in the house has retired.

This would be a real opportunity for an essay on "How it Feels to Sentence Oneself to Die," but who cares if it wouldn't matter a bit a hundred years from now? And then, so many darned suicides have an idea that the rest of the world is going to be interested in their theories on the "uselessness of living" or the "fascination of death"—horse feathers! They are interested in the prohibition question or the price of eggs in pies.

I'm fixing a little apparatus on the gas line—good idea. I'll get the full strength of the gas and prevent the odor of it from permeating the house and bringing on discovery too soon. Incidentally, I was twenty-two years of age on September 1, 1929.... The age on



my Marine Corps discharge is three years over. I had to lie about my age in order to get by.

There's two perfectly good pies here that someone might eat.

It is now 1:20 a.m. All is quiet on the Western front. All the drunks and night owls are in, so I'm off—no reprieve.

Took my "panacea" for all human ills. It won't be long now. I'll bet Florence and Ed [his wife and brother] are having uneasy dreams now. When the stuff starts to take effect, I'll plaster my little funnel to my face and turn on the gas.

Ten minutes later: My head is hot. I'm perspiring and shaky; brain is still clear, though. Wonder who will add up the pies tomorrow.

Still the same. 1:45 a.m. Hope I pass out by 2 a.m.

Gee, I love you so much, Florence. It's now 2:15 a.m. I feel very tired and a bit dizzy. I have the gas nozzle plastered on my face but disconnected from the gas jet. It's quite uncomfortable, damn it. My brain is very clear. I can see that my hand is shaking—it is hard to die when one is young. Now I wish oblivion would hurry.... [Note ends]

HONORABLE MENTION

Unemployed New York bond salesman William M. Jones left a series of notes while gassing himself in July, 1928:

SUICIDE NOTE:

(Excerpts):

... If humans had the sterling qualities of dogs, their faithfulness and friendship, this would be a fine world to live in.... Your father admits he is a failure....

7:15 p.m.—I am getting dizzy. My legs are becoming weak. I would love to have a smoke but I do not dare.... [Rest of note is illegible]

HONORABLE MENTION

Sucking kitchen gas through a tube while reclining amid a pile of cushions in the manner

of a hookah-smoking Arabian princess, Laura Michaels of Los Angeles documented her death with a pencil one night in October, 1919:

SUICIDE NOTE:

I have lived too long, especially the last two days. I have prayed to die, but God does not hear sinners' prayers.

It is 10:45 p.m.

I have lost my baby [presumably her boyfriend, James Crotty], the only one I ever had. All I ask of God is that my darling mother will forgive me.

As for what I have, it's only my hope that God is better to others than to me.

Esther just phoned, and I had a great laugh as I answered the phone. I said, "There's someone prolonging my death." All I ask of my baby is for him to keep the record I last played. They are all lying on the Victrola, and, if possible, [I ask] for him to get my diamonds out and keep them, as a remembrance of me.

—Laura Michaels

P.S.: There is lots I'd love to say, but it's too late now. The phone just rang again, but I never answered it.

It is now 11:05 p.m.

Here's to my last drink.

As for S. on Washington Street, she is mad at me, and B. also, but God above knows I never did them wrong. And poor little Peggie, I dream of her most every night, and poor Jack also.

My tears would drown most anything, but it's too late now.

My prayer is, "God bless all I know." I was never an enemy to anyone. God is my helper.

My last kiss [is] for my baby Jim.

You can imagine what my last thoughts were—engaged to you, [with you] loving someone else as you once loved me.

Poor little me.

It is now 11:44 o'clock p.m. [sic]

[Note ends]

HONORABLE MENTION

In November, 1896, an embezzler named Edgar Lytle described death's onslaught as he lay in a

Chicago hotel room's bed:

SUICIDE NOTE:

To M.D.:

Drank one ounce of laudanum. After five minutes feel little or no pain. Heart action now pronounced. A slight pain in stomach.

Note—My stomach is very weak, having suffered for years with acute dyspepsia.

Ten minutes—Condition about the same. Pulse rapid, and pains in wrists, and slight pain in region of heart. Hand trembles. A feeling of dullness, with more pain in all parts of the body.

(Note)—Will keep up this description of effects as long as possible. Hope it will be of use to medical science. Eyes show change. A feeling of drowsiness coming on. Sort of a feeling of intoxication, accompanied by slight fever.

Twenty minutes—Pain increasing. A slight perspiration started. Have a sort of numb feeling and no pain. [Rest is illegible]

HONORABLE MENTION

In 1928, twenty-two-year-old psychology student Michael Bross left this brief note while filling his lungs with gas in his Yonkers kitchen:

SUICIDE NOTE:

Well, I put on the gas. I know what life is. I want to know what death is. It won't be long now. It takes a long time to feel gas. It don't smell bad. I'm getting a little dizzy. I'm losing my ambition to write— [Remainder illegible]



Motherfucking vegetarians, always causing trouble. Nearly fifty years after his death, this lettuce-chewing leather boy remains the

SUICIDE



The baby, the boy, the little Hitler boy.

planet's number-one emblem of all-engulfing evil. But whatever his sins, it's hard to deny that he played the villain's role with incomparable panache. As reprehensible as his world-domination scheme might have been, it should have at least won an Oscar for set design.

Perhaps the most frightening assertion that one could make about Hitler is that he was *not* a fire-breathing dragon, that he was a human being, someone who put on his armbands one bicep at a time. And despite all his *Übermenschian* puffery, Dolfy himself was far from a model specimen. He suffered from poor vision, headaches, and a nervous condition which may have been Parkinson's disease. There were also rumors of a tragicomic set of flaws: that Deutschland's number-one scrotum contained only one testicle; that Hitler could only get aroused after being shit upon; and that he

cut farts which could render grizzly bears unconscious.

For a brief time he nearly ruled the world. But by January, 1945, Hitler's *Wehrmacht* was weary. His *Luftwaffe* was limp. His panzers were pooped. With hostile armies approaching from all sides, he hid himself in a concrete bunker fifty feet below Berlin's ravaged streets. The accommodations were far from palatial. The smell of damp cement filled the corridors. Plaster hung from the walls. A diesel engine slowly whirled. Lights swelled on and off in response to the bombings. Puffy and ghostly, with glazed eyes and his right hand shaking uncontrollably, a hunched-over Hitler goose-stepped around the *Führerbunker*, screaming that his generals had betrayed him. This isn't to imply that he lost his fun-loving side: When he wasn't agonizing over his ever-shrinking domain, he found time to play with his dog Blondi's puppies and make small talk with Joseph Goebbels's six children, Helga, Holde, Hilde, Heidi, Hedda, and Helmut.

By the end of April, with ragtag packs of Hitler Youth defending a few crater-filled blocks in central Berlin, Adolf realized that the end was near. He didn't want the Russians to capture him on their beloved May Day and parade him around in a cage like an Aryan orangutan. On the twenty-eighth, he dictated his last testament to his secretary, blaming you-know-which-race for everything and insisting that he was a pacifist who had an unwanted war thrust upon him. After midnight, he married Eva Braun, the Third Reich's premier piece of ass. During a festive sandwiches-and-champagne reception, he dampened everyone's spirits by shrieking that he was finished.

At three-thirty p.m. on April 30, with Russian troops only a block away, Adolf and Eva bade farewell to their underlings. After doling out their adieus, they entered Hitler's private apartment and slammed the door behind them. Wishing to leave the world as "a beautiful

corpse," Eva swallowed a cyanide capsule. Hitler shot himself in the right temple with a Walther pistol. Guards found the Nazi sweethearts on opposite ends of a blue-and-white sofa. Flowers were scattered on the floor. Hitler was slumped over, his head bleeding onto the carpet. He clutched a picture of his mother to his chest. The mom and pop of the master race were then wrapped in blankets and taken to a trench in the Chancellery garden, where they were soaked with gasoline and set ablaze. It reportedly took two-and-a-half hours for the flames to subside. Their ashes were buried around eleven p.m.

Thus ends the story of a frustrated little demon who cut a wider swath in the global psyche than you or I ever will. While you dance on his grave, hock loogies on his likeness, and dismiss eugenics as quackery, think for a minute—if you had only bought the man's paintings, it never would have come to this!



The problem with social activists is that most of them lead personal lives which make those of loan sharks seem moral by comparison. Common sense dictates that if you can't properly wipe your own ass, you have no business trying to clean up the world.

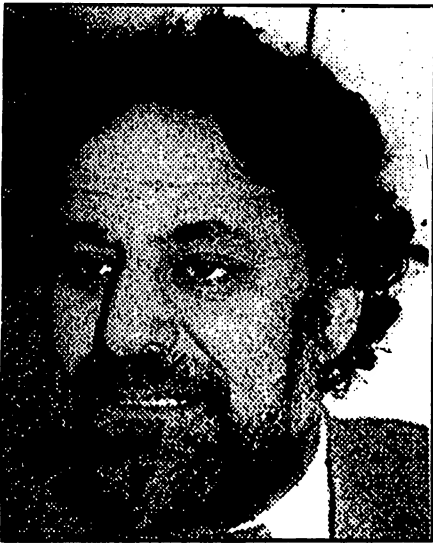
But Abbie Hoffman flourished in an era when common sense was viewed as a repressive tool of the Old Guard. This was back when one's level of political commitment was gauged by the strength of one's armpit funk, when your "progressiveness" was measured by how well you emulated primitive hunter-gatherer tribes. America's living standard had reached its apogee, and material wealth was so great, people could afford to reject it.

Hoffman, a leading exponent of the Caucasian Afro, stood apart from most of his generation's Che clones by dint of his sense of humor. Although the Bushy One may have been misguided, he was sincerely so. He was also very entertaining in his ability to bait people with their worst fears. The image of a Yiddish yippie with Medusa locks burning the flag and threatening to dose public reservoirs with LSD must have rattled them down at the V.F.W. hall. It was fun to watch him terrify the squares—you have to remember that this was a time when *right-wingers* were the humorlessly dogmatic ones.

He went "underground" after a coke bust in the seventies and had extensive plastic surgery so the "pigs" wouldn't recognize him. When he emerged from hibernation in the eighties, he was a rather predictable leftist banner-carrier and diagnosed manic-depressive. He took residence in a rural Pennsylvania turkey coop that he and a friend named Michael Waldron had remade into an apartment. Waldron would later recall how Abbie practiced his political speeches in front of a pair of llamas who grazed near his cement-block coop. On April 12, 1987,



Hey, Adolf, wake up! Oh, fuck—he's DEAD!



Waldron went to the apartment and discovered Abbie's dead body lying fully clothed in bed. He had overdosed on phenobarbital and alcohol. His brother Jack later explained that Abbie was "somewhat careless with pills." I guess so—he had "accidentally" swallowed nearly two hundred of them. Some folks theorized that Abbie was despondent that the sixties would never return. If the dumb shit had only waited a few years, he'd be moon-dancing amid an appalling tie-dyed renaissance, albeit one cloaked in pounding dance music and promises of cybernetic salvation.

In college, I once watched the fiery revolutionary debate apostate yippie Jerry Rubin. When I tried to shake Ab's hand, he acted as if I had stolen a gram of red hash from him before grudgingly tendering his paw. Fuck you, Abbie. I hope your room in hell is staffed with a dozen Chicago cops in full riot gear.

#40

Danny Holley

ONE LESS MOUTH TO FEED

When Army Sergeant Johnnie Holley was transferred to South Korea, his thirteen-year-old son Danny became the man of the house. Danny assumed the burden like a good little soldier, shedding all youthful horseplay for his new role as family sentinel. From sunup to sundown, he could be seen rummaging through the garbage, searching for aluminum cans. At the end of each day, he carried his bounty to a local supermarket, where he redeemed them for a penny each. On a good day, Danny found up to nine hundred cans and would bring home about nine dollars. It wasn't much, but his family was barely scraping by on a military salary, and even a little money helped keep rice and beans on the table.

Life had been hard for Danny, his Irish-born mother, and his three younger siblings since they had moved with their black father from West Germany to a rented house near California's Fort Ord. The house was expensive, but on-base accommodations which the Army had promised

them never materialized. A bureaucratic blooper kept the family's savings languishing in a German bank. Yet another snafu sent their car from Germany to an unknown destination, and no one seemed able to find it. The Army gave them a thirteen-hundred-dollar emergency loan, but rent and food expenses quickly sucked it dry. Even a book of free bus passes given to Mrs. Holley was used up in no time. With the cupboard bare and Mr. Holley overseas, the family sat and waited. Danny finally took to picking through garbage dumps like an old, hungry dog. "If there was one less mouth to feed," he frequently told his mom, "things would be better."

On August 27, 1984, Danny decided to remove that mouth from the family equation. As Mrs. Holley played with her other three children in front of the house, Danny went around back. He fastened a cable onto a small planter's hook which was screwed into a wooden eave. The earnest little boy wrapped the cable around his neck and sent himself swinging in the warm summer wind.



At Danny's funeral, an Army chaplain called the penny-pinching mulatto "a young man who took too much responsibility on himself." Hope arrived too late to save Danny: The family car was finally located in New Orleans; assets thought to have been frozen in Germany were traced to a Kentucky bank; and nearly two thousand dollars' worth of charitable donations flowed in from around the country. Another mouth to feed wouldn't be a problem now, but rigor mortis had closed it shut forever.

#41

Derek Humphry's Wives

FINAL EXIT TWICE OVER

What a barrel of laughs Derek Humphry must be—as president and founder of Oregon's Hemlock Society, he's the den mother to the

world's largest self-terminating social club. His book *Final Exit*, a nuts-and-bolts how-to primer on suicide, shot to the top of the best-seller charts and resulted in a publicity blitz for the voluntary-euthanasia camp. Alongside Jack Kevorkian, he's probably the world's most visible champion of the right to "self-deliverance." Oh, I almost forgot—he had two wives, both of whom killed themselves.

Jean, his first spouse, was diagnosed with malignant tit cancer in 1972. It spread throughout her dairy stations and into her spine. By 1974, doctors said she had less than a year to live. Her leg bones were so brittle, they would have snapped like twigs if she had dared to walk. Doped-up and wheelchair-bound, she made Derek promise to help her end the suffering. A loving, devoted hubby, Derek quickly procured some codeine and Seconal. Over breakfast one morning in 1975, Jean told Derek that she was ready. The couple, who had been married for twenty-two years, reminisced about the good times. Derek then mixed the drugs into a coffee cup and left it on Jean's night stand. Within fifty minutes, Jean was as dead as a sea gull in the Exxon Valdez oil slick. Derek would later call it an "act of love."

Since assisted suicide is a crime in Great Britain, Derek didn't tell many people about how he had helped usher Jean into the Holy City. One of those he confided to was Ann Wickett, an American student of Shakespeare whom he married in 1976. Ann was touched at how sweet and unselfish Derek's act of love was, urging him to write a book about the experience. *Jean's Way* was published in 1978, marking the dawn of Humphry's celebrity.

Along with a lawyer and a religion professor, Derek and Ann founded the Hemlock Society in August, 1980. Ann was by this time the First Lady of Suicide, a whole-hog convert to Derek's Gospel of self-deliverance. In 1986, when Ann's parents groused about failing (but not fatal) health, she and Derek flew to Boston with a megadose of the barbiturate Vesparax and helped kick the old poops through the goal posts of heaven. When Ann's mom began to gag on the downers, Derek instructed Ann to place a plastic laundry bag over the dried-up hag's mouth. "She died very peacefully," Ann would later say, "but I walked away from that house thinking we're both murderers." She was startled at how placid Derek seemed about the incident. "He could walk away from it," she said, "and within twenty-four hours he was back again mowing the lawn." Ann would write an unconvincingly fictionalized account of her parents' twin suicide in the book *Double Exit*.

Ann was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1989. Only days after she started chemotherapy, Derek left a message on her answering machine saying that he wanted a divorce. Ann wiggled out and was committed to a psychiatric institution. Upon her release, she tried to persuade Hemlock's staff to fire Derek, only to find that they had changed the office's locks and left her without a key. Derek was soon calling her a "borderline personality" who had merely been afflicted with "a touch of cancer." Ann shot back, accusing Derek of having confessed to her that he had smothered his first wife with a



Ann Humphry: Like Derek "Final Exit" Humphry's former wife Jean, she had boob cancer. Like Jean, she killed herself.

pillow, an act which would have constituted murder. She also filed suit against him for libel and slander, citing remarks he had made about her allegedly psychotic behavior. Her attorneys decided that the suit wasn't worth pursuing. That, coupled with the fact that several publishers had rejected her "I'm-a-chick-who-survived-breast-cancer" book proposal while Derek's *Final Exit* topped the charts, was probably too much to take.

On October 1, 1991, seated in the living room of her woodsy Oregon ranch, Ann made a videotape explaining why she wanted to kill herself. With her was Julie Horvath, a vocal anti-euthanasia agitator Ann had secretly befriended during Horvath's debates with Derek. On the tape, Ann explained that she had reconsidered her position on the right-to-die movement when Derek seemed unmoved by her cancer diagnosis: "I remember feeling really chilled to the bone because now it was my life and my dying, and it was kind of like, 'Good, get out of the way as quickly as possible.' ... I know I was being pushed out of the picture."

The next day, after Horvath had flown back to Los Angeles, Ann wrote a series of goodbye notes. She let her Scottish Highland cattle run loose and hitched her Arabian horse to a trailer. Blasting the soundtrack to *Rocky IV*, she drove a hundred miles through the Oregon wilderness and parked at the edge of a trail. She then mounted her horse and galloped to a pine-dotted meadow facing the Three Sisters Mountains. It was near sunset at one of her favorite places on earth. She set the horse free and sat down with her back to a tree. Then, using a handful of pills and a bottle of Chevis Regal, she delivered herself. A search team found her six days later. For the stated purpose of "damage control," Derek took out a half-page ad in the *New York Times*, explaining that "Ann was dogged by emotional problems...."

Derek keeps blazing trails, a professional widower whose reputation grows as the bodies

mount. As of 1991, the Hemlock Society (or, as we like to call it, "Deathco.") could brag of forty-six thousand members, with an estimated eight hundred new suicide students joining each month. Derek's transcontinental fame, his publishing triumphs, and his droopy basset-hound looks would make him quite the catch for any nubile seeking an apprenticeship in self-cessation: "That's right, Derek, deliver me, baby, oh, ohhh, DE-LIV-ER MEEEE!" But sorry, ladies—Derek has married again!

SUICIDE NOTE:

(Ann's note):

Derek:

There. You got what you wanted. Ever since I was diagnosed as having cancer, you have done everything conceivable to precipitate my death.

I was not alone in recognizing what you were doing. What you did—desertion and abandonment and subsequent harrassment [sic] of a dying woman—is so unspeakable, there are no words to describe the horror of it.

Yet you know. And others know, too. You will have to live with this until [sic] you die.

May you never, ever forget.

Ann

#42

The Ingersoll Suicides

TAKE HEART! KILL YOURSELF!

Some people will do just about anything you tell

them to do. Like speed-snorting chinchillas, they scurry about trying to please others. They've amputated their egos with one swift razor's swipe, and feelings of self-worth only come in the form of transfusions from others. They'll fluff up your pillow to make you feel good, but it makes them feel even better. If you ask for a couple of ice cubes to freshen your lemonade, they'll fetch a whole tray. If you assure them that it's in their best interest, they'll even kill themselves.

"Suicide is not Death" was one of the headlines for a series of pro-suicide newspaper articles published by the *New York World* in the summer of 1894. Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll, known in his day as "The Great Agnostic," was a purported contributor to the forum. Despite an avowed anti-religious stance, Ingersoll's polemical prose seemed suited for the pulpit. "Kill yourself!" he allegedly howled in the article. "You are poor? Kill yourself! You are lonely? Kill yourself! Be your own judge. Be your own jury. Acquit yourself before trial. Suspend sentence on yourself before you convict yourself. Escape from the supreme jurisdiction—your own. Be your own judge. Kill yourself!... You are an important heir. Kill your lagging predecessor! You are a discontented wife—kill your husband! You are a freedom-seeking son—kill your father! You are weary of repression and worn out by advice—kill your mother! You are disgusted with spiritual dependence—kill God!... Take heart, poor friend! Take heart! Take heart! Kill yourself!"

Who could argue? During the month after these ravings were published, at least three New Yorkers were persuaded to kill themselves, and a fourth was murdered by her suicidal lover. A fifth tried committing suicide and failed. All of them left incontrovertible evidence that Ingersoll had been an inspiration. The most-publicized case was that of Julius Marcus and his seventeen-year-old lover, Juliette Fournier. In the early morning hours of August 21, 1894, Julius shot Juliette in the heart before shooting himself. Julius was discovered lying on top of Juliette in an isolated stretch of Central Park. In his pocket was found a clipping of "Suicide is not Death." The case scandalized New York because Fournier was committing adultery through her involvement with Marcus. She had been married to her own uncle, a man more than twice her age.

In September, an alcoholic vaudevillian named John Del Vecho and his wife swallowed carbolic acid in their boarding house on Manhattan's Upper West Side. "Perhaps it is owing to my oversensitiveness," he wrote in his bon voyage letter, "or from reading Ingersoll's theories, I don't know which. But I know that I have done nothing evil or nothing to merit the reproaches of honest people (except drink). May God forgive me." God apparently did, because while his wife went the way of all flesh, Del Vecho survived both the carbolic acid and a self-inflicted razor wound to his throat.

A Brooklyn woman named Emma Gould, reportedly not the least bit suicidal until she read Ingersoll's article, became preoccupied with self-termination after poring over the good Colonel's words. A boarding-house landlady,

she hectored all her tenants with endless tirades about suicide before tipping a fatal dose of poison.

Competing New York newspapers, most notably the *Times*, pounced on the opportunity to condemn the *World* for publishing Ingersoll's invective. "The Satanic journalism of New York has at last had its baptism of blood," crowed the *Times*, calling Ingersoll "the running footman of the devil."

Ingersoll, who had been out of town during most of the furor, returned highly miffed at the *World* and threatened to sue. He claimed that a *World* reporter had interviewed him and then rearranged the answers, making it appear that Ingersoll had written the article. Taken in their proper context, Ingersoll insisted, his quotes would not have given such a pro-suicide impression. Still, it's hard to imagine how an injunction as strong as "Take heart! Kill yourself!" could be decontextualized. Perhaps the reporter had lopped off a final disclaimer by Ingersoll, something such as, "Never mind!" or that grating retraction so popular among the kids today, "—not!"

#43 *Jack the Bum* JACK WAS DUMB

Jackie R. lived in the same suburban Philadelphia tract-housing community in which I was raised. Culled from the same inbred Irish-Catholic stock as the rest of us, Jackie was a dim bulb by any standards. He was a ganglier version of *Mad* magazine's Alfred E. Neuman, although I'm reasonably sure that Alfred E. wasn't cataleptic from cheap beer and angel dust. In later life, Jackie was rumored to have found his calling as a meth merchant for the Warlocks motorcycle gang. But before he dropped out of school, he did something so stupid, people still talk about it. He cheated on a test, copying all the answers from a person seated next to him. Luckily, the other person had studied, so Jackie answered most of the questions right. What raised the teacher's suspicions was the fact that Jackie had also copied the other person's name.

Until I heard about Jack the Bum, I considered Jackie R.'s lamebrained faux pas the single most imbecilic act I'd encountered. Then again, there was an in-law of mine who, staring at a hotel swimming pool, asked, "How can it be eight feet on one end and three feet on the other end when it's even on top?" Regardless, Jack the Bum has both of them beaten. Described by the *New York Times* as a "forlorn little hoodlum," Jack was a reform-school grad who at eighteen was making a living by burglarizing railroad cars and doing odd jobs for Betty Harris, a "colored washwoman" from Upper Manhattan. On the morning of April 10, 1892, he visited Mrs. Harris's apartment and found her stoking the breakfast fires with a handful of guests. Weaving about and slurring his words, Jack was obviously blotto, but the assembled party paid him little mind. Feeling slighted, Jack drew a

revolver and pointed it at itinerant plumber George Stevens. Stevens firmly instructed Jack to drop the gun. Jack pulled the trigger instead, but no round was expended. Jack was undoubtedly embarrassed that Mrs. Harris and her visitors, probably his only friends in the world, would think that he couldn't even fire a gun properly. He would set the matter straight, elevate himself once again in their eyes. "I'll show you how to do it," Jack said, and into his head he sent a bullet, which was miraculously able to find its way into his pea-sized brain.

HONORABLE MENTION

In 1988, Dallas residents Jerry Apodaca and Tim Rhea were engaged in a friendly debate as to whether a well-placed karate kick could knock a gun from an attacker's hand. Apodaca thought it was possible, but when he attempted to boot a .45-caliber pistol out of Rhea's claw, the gun went off, killing Rhea. Feeling like a schmuck, Apodaca called 911 and then shot himself.

#44 *Joe, the Boy With Elastic Skin* HIS HEART WAS STRETCHED BEYOND REPAIR

The life of a genetic mutant is indeed a bittersweet one. Other people fixate on your peculiarity with equal helpings of attention (which forms the basis of love) and repulsion (which limits your social life to blowup dolls and vinyl felling devices which plug into an auto's cigarette-lighter jack).

Joe, the Boy with Elastic Skin, had received such conflicting signals all his life. Born Clarence H. Alexander, his epidermal malformity provided him with a decent living, but it also amplified those distant pangs of otherness. A sideshow freak for Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, Joe sated the loutish desires of gawking onlookers by tugging at his spongy hide. Night after night, in town after town, he served up cheap thrills by pulling at his pelt like so much chewing gum. But living out of a suitcase, as anyone who's spent time in a rock band

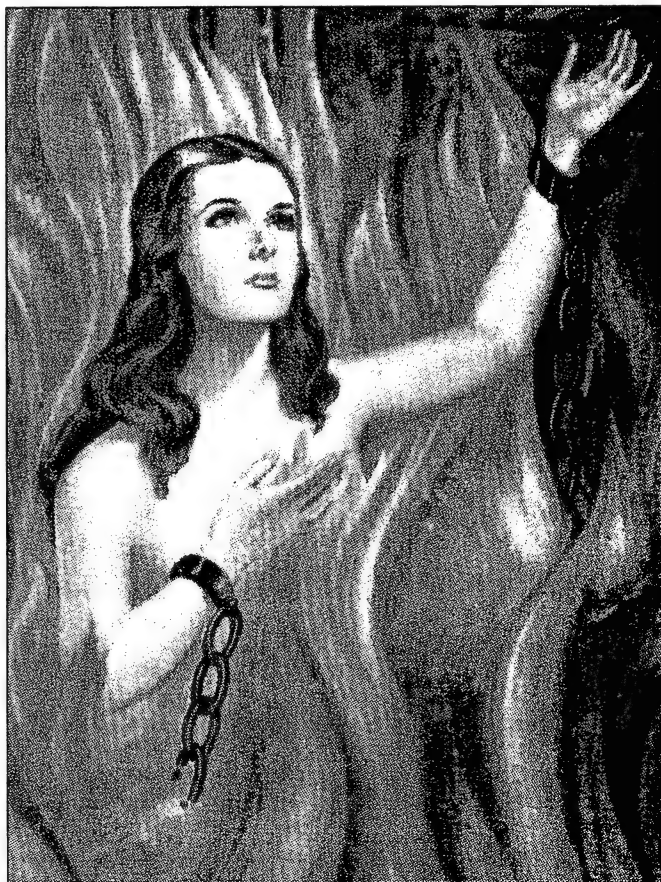
or fleeing the feds knows, ultimately numbs the higher emotions.

By the summer of 1927, Joe felt beaten down by the grueling existence. His heart alighted on the Tattooed Lady, but the unfeeling bitch spurned his advances. Joe probably had come to expect rejection from the normals, but to be shunned by a fellow freak was gabba-gabba-hateful. One sweltering July night in Michigan, as the curious ticket-holders clustered around Joe's sideshow platform, the rubbery romantic guzzled a bottle filled with strychnine. Several women fainted as Joe collapsed. Circus workers seized Joe's bouncy bulk and motored it toward a local hospital, but Joe expired en route. It's a pity that the Tattooed Lady never responded to Joe's overtures, for his skin condition made him perfectly suited to ravish her with the notorious pleasures of the Sumatran Guava Bat Trick.

#45 *Roop Harwar* HUNKA HUNKA BURNIN' LOVE

The international feminist conspiracy purses its hairy lips at the idea of heterosexual devotion, particularly when it involves sacrifice. They find theoretical justification in getting clubbed like a baby seal on behalf of pan-cervical unity, but to give of oneself for some man's stinky ass represents the summit of gaucheness.

"Go fuck thyself," retort traditional Hindu women, "may Lord Vishnu reincarnate you as a



lowly sea snail." For untold millennia, back to the days of the Rig-Vedas and Krishna's blue-faced chariot ride, Hindu babes have observed the stately practice of suttee. Rather than endure a widowhood nibbling on stale samosas and accruing karmic demerits, many wives of newly dead Hin-dudes choose to join their mates in a barbecue for the gods. After the deceased's funeral pyre is prepared with coconuts, sandalwood, and a clarified-butter product known as ghee, the bereaved female mounts the heap of kindling and calmly buoys her husband's head in her lap. A male relative then ignites the brush pile with a torch, and the faithful squaw cremates her way onto a higher spiritual plane. When the flames recede, observants rush to pick among the embers, which are considered relics.

Suttee was banned in India by British imperialists in 1829, but the ritual has proven to be alarmingly resilient. If the widow's husband was particularly noteworthy, a good suttee can draw zealots in crowds befitting a soccer game. In 1987, after twenty-four-year-old Maal Singh's appendix blew, his teenaged wife Roop Kanwar willingly torched herself along with him. Roopie-roo's martyr status was inflated when her relatives were busted for aiding a suicide. Twelve days after the connubial bonfire, over a hundred thousand believers squeezed into the tiny hamlet of Deorala for a celebration of Kanwar's self-immolation. The whole event resembled a dot-head Lollapalooza, with vendors selling photos of the toasted lovebirds.

Of course, if Roop had died first instead of her husband, no one would have expected him to follow her into eternity. They wouldn't have flinched if he ran around town squirting his jism all over the place like cake frosting. That may not be fair, but it's the way of the world, sweetie pie.

#46

Doug Kenney
NATIONAL LAMPOON'S
SUICIDAL VACATION

The *National Lampoon* was a humor magazine which flourished in the button-fly days of the early seventies, and at its best, it wasn't half-bad. Perhaps its most lasting achievement was its mass-marketing of death humor, epitomized by the oft-imitated *If You Don't Buy This Magazine, We'll Kill This Dog* cover of January, 1973. For the most part, though, it rarely transcended its undeclared role as a clearinghouse for comedic juvenilia appealing to WASPish frat spuds. It was a spawning ground for such latter-day country-club apologists as P.J. O'Rourke, the silver-spoon wisenheimer type who eats dope and flips boogers at the Establishment before being absorbed into his predestined life of privilege. The 'poon exists today as a wretched husk of its former self, a trite diversion for toilet-bound stockbrokers nursing hemorrhoids.

But back in its prime, Doug Kenney was the *National Lampoon's* gilded leprechaun, the mag's co-founder whose one-shot projects such as the 1964 *High School Yearbook Parody* sold



over a million copies. A *Lampoon* radio show exposed national audiences to such future *Saturday Night Live* fixtures as John Belushi and Chevy Chase.

When Kenney split from the *Lampoon* in the mid-seventies, taking with him severance pay of nearly three million bucks, he went on to co-author *Animal House*, which grossed more than all previous filmic comedies. Kenney soon matched his dinosaurian success with a typically debauched Hollywood lifestyle: fistfights with studio execs, drunken press conferences, and an appetite for cocaine which led associates to believe that Doug could snort up all of Antarctica. He followed *Animal House* with *Caddyshack*, a strip of celluloid sewage which, though mildly successful, left a few nicks in Doug's patina of invincibility. His coke-fueled persecution complex was becoming well-known around Hollywood, and Kenney started making mordant references to his alleged suicide attempts: "You have to learn to roll with the bullets."

At Chevy Chase's prodding, Doug agreed to fly to Hawaii in August, 1980, for rest, relaxation, and coke detox. After about a week of abstinence, Doug was phoning his dealer for sandbags of the stuff. Both Kenney's fiancée and Chase eventually flew back to the mainland to meet obligations, leaving Doug buzzing solo around Kauai like a gnat on helium. After a few days of two-hundred-mile-an-hour introspection, Kenney could take no more. He wrote a short note, scribbled "I love you" on his bathroom mirror with a soap bar, and drove his Jeep to a scenic bluff. He purposely walked past signs warning of danger, trod through some ankle-choking shrubbery, stepped onto a rocky escarpment, and flung his preppie physique down onto the salt-sprayed boulders. He remains, to borrow a phrase popularized by his good friend Chevy, critically dead.

SUICIDE NOTE:

(Excerpt):

- These are some of the happiest days I've ever ignored.

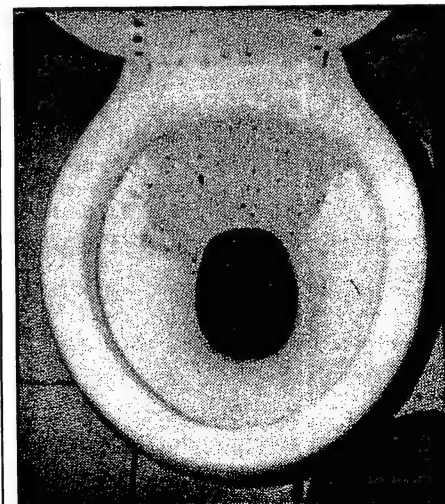
#47

Thomas Kenney
THE WAY OF ALL TURDS

Scientists in the Middle Ages believed in spontaneous generation, a hypothesis which stated that living matter arose from inert material. As proof, they cited their observation that flies sprouted from shit. If they had microscopes, they would have seen fly eggs nestling within the warm, mushy feces, a discovery which seemingly disproved their contention. However, spontaneous generation can't be entirely discounted. Inanimate manure has always nurtured living plant matter, which feeds higher vertebrates, who eventually die and revert back to mulch. The biblical utterance, "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," might ring truer had the word 'dust' been substituted with 'shit.'

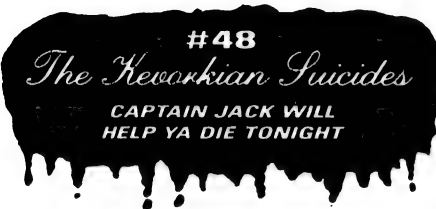
If one were to anthropomorphize a city such as New York, its digestive system would surely be its sewers, the thoroughfares through which shit flows. Sewers process a staggering amount of sickening bilge, the matted hair, vomit, menstrual blood, jellied mucus, aborted fetuses, fermented sperm, and water-logged guano of an entire metropolis.

Amid the torrid Manhattan July of 1891, Thomas Kenney decided to flush himself out of existence. Wearing a threadbare suit and black derby, he was spotted exiting a liquor store at 26th and Third. He gazed up and down the block, walked into the middle of the road, and pried open a manhole cover. Apparently indecisive, he let go of the cover, which loudly clanged as Kenney disappeared back into the liquor shop. Roughly five minutes passed before he returned into the street, lifted the steel cover yet again, and once more let it drop, walking



back inside. Within another five minutes he was again standing over the open manhole. "Here she goes," he bellowed, plopping down the hole like a five-and-a-half-foot whale turd.

Kenney's swollen blue body was found floating in the East River three days after his suicide. His face had been half-eaten by rats. Ironically, Kenney had been known as an expert lifesaver who had snatched many would-be drowning victims from the East River's maws. Although he was dead, he gave life back to the city's bowels by providing nutrients to its rodent community. The shit never goes away, it just gets recycled.



Death is Jack Kevorkian's business, and business is good. But like any pioneer, he has his detractors. He has been reviled as a "serial mercy killer" and "Jeffrey Dahmer in a lab coat." His foes suggest that he's a bit too libidinous about the whole death experience, and they cite his history of near-monomaniacal death-absorption to buttress their contention. They point to his 1958 ejection from the University of Michigan, where he argued that Death Row prisoners should be knocked unconscious and experimented upon, that their executed bodies would be fertile ground for post-mortem organ harvesting. His enemies call attention to the part-time painter's early-sixties exhibit entitled "Art is Bunk," where an original Kevorkian work called "Genocide" featured a frame smeared with blood drawn from a blood bank. The anti-Kevorkian army scorns some of his other pet projects, such as injecting live patients with blood drawn from fresh corpses and his practice of running to the hospital beds of newly dead patients and photographing their eyes to see if he could gauge precisely when they died.

In his defense, the Michigan physician argues that his role is beneficent, preferring the moniker "Dr. Life" to his better-known appellation. He rightly states that not all historical cultures have been as suicide-phobic as our current one. And he'd find millions of Americans who agree with his basic premise, that a dignified, self-directed death is boundlessly preferable to a slow, putrefactive one.

Born sixty-five years ago in Pontiac, Michigan, Dr. Jack says he first embraced euthanasia as a medical student, when he witnessed terminal patients' pitiful entreaties for a quick, merciful end. He quit practicing medicine in 1988 in order to pursue his "long-range goal of terminal experimentation." He printed business cards which read, "Jack

Kevorkian, M.D., Bioethics and Obituary [a word of his own coinage, meaning 'death doctoring']." He placed classified ads which stated, "DOCTOR CONSULTANT—for the terminally ill who wish to die w/dignity." But it was an odd little ad he attempted to place in a medical journal, an ad which the journal rejected, which set him on the path toward infamy.

The ad touted a machine Kevorkian had labeled the "Mercitron," a device he reportedly constructed for less than thirty dollars from materials purchased at flea markets. There wasn't much to it—a frame made of aluminum scrap, some plastic tubing, three intravenous bottles, and a motor taken from a toy car—but the Mercitron was unique in that it enabled people to kill themselves. It worked like this: A doctor injects the patient with a harmless saline solution running from the first bottle into the patient's bloodstream. Then, tugging on the first of two strings attached to their fingers, the patient opens the flow from the second bottle, which contains the sedative sodium pentothal.

The sedative renders the patient unconscious within thirty seconds, causing his or

her arm to fall. When their arm falls, it pulls a string which triggers the third bottle, containing a lethal dose of potassium chloride. The patient is dead within six minutes. Dr. Kevorkian calls his Mercitron a "benevolent monster." Most everyone else calls it a "suicide machine."

Controversy generated by the suicide machine hastened an appearance on the *Donahue* show, after which Kevorkian was deluged with requests from would-be suicides worldwide. Kevorkian established strict criteria for his applicants. First, he required them to furnish medical proof that they are terminally ill (although, his opponents are quick to point out, not imminently terminal). Second, a patient's family members must assent to the procedure. Third, a thorough psychiatric evaluation must be made, discounting any instances where the patient's problems are deemed to be primarily mental. Finally, once having made the decision, a patient is not permitted to backtrack; if they do, their case is dropped from consideration.

The first human to sample the Mercitron's deathly tendrils was Janet Adkins, an Alzheimer's patient from Portland, Oregon. After a fruitless search for a private home in which to conduct his first assisted suicide, Kevorkian resurrected his



The fun-lovin' doc, surrounded by ten of his patients (clockwise from top row): Janet Adkins, Marjorie Wantz, Sherry Miller, Lois Hawes, Catherine Andreyev, Jack Miller, Stanley Ball, Hugh Gale, Jonathan Grenz, and Martha Ruwart.

crotchety 1968 Volkswagen van, vacuuming it and sewing a set of rear-window curtains for the occasion. Adkins, who had played tennis a few days previously but dreaded a progressive loss of mental acuity, flew with her husband to Michigan. On June 4, 1990, while her husband stayed at a motel, she drove with Kevorkian's two sisters to some campgrounds outside Detroit where the doctor had parked his van. Things went far from smoothly—while making preparations, Kevorkian spilled his barbiturate solution, requiring Adkins to wait two-and-a-half hours while he rushed home to get more. After returning, it took him five pokes into Adkins's arm before the needle took. On the fifth try, as Adkins pulled the switch and the sedative entered her bloodstream, she said, "Thank you, thank you."

"Have a nice trip," Kevorkian replied.

The media went apeshit over the next few days, interviewing Kevorkian around the clock. Michigan authorities impounded the Mercitron. Four days after Adkins's death, a judge prohibited Kevorkian from using the machine again, proclaiming, "It's the end of Dr. K. helping patients die." Five months later, Kevorkian's medical license was suspended. In December, 1990, he was charged with murdering Adkins. The charges were later dropped.

Another ten months would pass before Kevorkian would again perform an assisted suicide, and this time it was two in one day. Marjorie Wantz, fifty-eight, was a Michigan trailer-park resident who awoke neighbors at night with her shrieking caused by a painful genital disorder. She had failed in two previous suicide attempts. Sherry Miller, forty-three, suffered from multiple sclerosis. Both women had reportedly been petitioning Kevorkian for two years, and the doctor, unsure of how long he would remain a free man, decided that both should do it during the same session. The women, with Kevorkian present, made videotapes where they detailed their suicidal intentions. On October 23, 1991, they drove to an appointed cabin in the Bald Mountain Recreation Area north of Detroit. As with Adkins, they were forced to wait for hours while a bumbling Dr. Kevorkian had to rush home and fetch some forgotten equipment. Wantz went first via a reconstituted Mercitron, but Miller, whose veins were unreceptive to four jabs with a needle, was the first of Kevorkian's patients to die by inhaling carbon monoxide through a mask. After both suicides were completed, Kevorkian phoned the police. He was again charged with murder, and the charges were again dismissed.

Stripped of his medical license and thus unable to obtain potassium chloride, Kevorkian used his carbon-monoxide contraption in all subsequent assisted suicides. Multiple-sclerosis patient Susan Williams huffed smog on May 15, 1992; Lois Hawes, suffering from lung cancer, sucked exhaust on September 25; breast-cancer patient Catherine Andreyev inhaled a fatal amount of the sooty stuff nearly two months later. Hours after the two-for-the-price-of-one suicides of Marguerite Tate (Lou Gehrig's disease) and Marcella Lawrence (emphysema),

Michigan passed a law banning assisted suicide, to take effect on April 1, 1993. Kevorkian, hearing the clock ticking, stepped on the gas. On January 20, bone-cancer victim Jack Elmer Miller toked on mucho monoxide. In February, six more of Kevorkian's incurables were to breathe their last: Stanley Ball (pancreatic cancer); Mary Biernat (breast cancer); Elaine Goldbaum (M.S.); Hugh Gale (emphysema); Jonathan Grenz (throat cancer); and Martha Ruwart (intestinal/ovarian cancer). On February 26, eight days after Grenz and Ruwart's suicides, Michigan's anti-suicide bill was made immediately effective. Kevorkian waited nearly three months to test the law, overseeing lung-and-bone cancer victim Ron Mansur's smog party on May 16, 1993.

The world, divided on whether he's an angel or a pariah, joyously awaits his next step. At *ANSWER Mel*, we tend to see him as a hero. In our book, his only sin was appearing on *Donahue*.



A high school's corridors are like a cellblock, a dark, savage jungle composed of punks and studs. The punks get bullied and bitch-slapped.

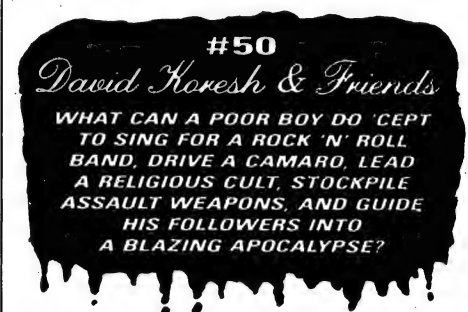


They have cafeteria food thrown at them. They get hoisted by the back seat of their drawers, thrown into the showers, and gang-raped by hooting cockswains.

Mike Keys was tired of being a punk. He bought a set of weights and began methodically pumping his way from runty beanpole to meat-packin' man. Cruising gyms around the town of Mount Clemens, Michigan, he learned to love the bright lights and shiny steel, the homoerotic allure of testicle sweat. Weights beefed him up somewhat, but Mike craved more power, the ability to crack walnuts with his biceps.

He turned to steroids. It began with tablets, but he was soon getting testosterone-filled spikes jammed into his veins. Muscle tissue swiftly trash-compacted itself onto his spindly frame. Mike became swollen like a life raft, anabolically bloated, a broad-shouldered billy goat bucking through school seeking to rut the nearest nanny. He was toolin'.

Steroids, however, imbue the addict with a blast-furnace personality. Mike, too, became prone to chemical conniptions, the unblinking rage of a Goad. His friends were alarmed at the once-docile seventeen-year-old's new-found explosiveness. On a nippy day just before Christmas in 1988, Mike became peeved with a rather picayune problem: The weather had frozen his car door's lock. Mike was able to bench-press slag heaps of steel, but he couldn't pop the goddamned door open. He hurried into the warmth of his weight room, lifted a .22-caliber rifle, and pumped some "iron" into his head. A few hours later, his father discovered Mike's buffed-out corpse sprawled next to his weights. His son had plenty of meat, but the motion was gone.



"If the Bible is true, then I'm Christ," said David Koresh to his fellow cultists, who hung onto every word of the well-hung holy man's harangue. "But so what? Look at two thousand years ago. What's so great about being Christ? A man nailed to the cross. A man acquainted with grief. You know, being Christ ain't nothing."

At the risk of sounding disrespectful, it *does* have its perks. How else but by becoming Christ can a boy named Vernon Howell, a ninth-grade dropout with a learning disability, snag a boss 427 black Camaro, all the beer he can drink, and more PUSSEY than he could shake his divine rod at? Never far from his electric guitar, the would-be rock star sold himself as Jesus-with-a-twist: He would save the world from sin, but only by sticking his own head up the wide brown ass of iniquity and sniffing around. He would become, as he told his toadies, "a sinner without equal.... Now what better sinner can know a



sinner than a godly sinner? Huh?"

Makin' whoopee was his sin of choice. In order to assure that the seed for his new holy nation was of the proper lineage, Koresh (the Hebrew transliteration of Persia's King Cyrus) forbade his male disciples from having sex with female cultists. He also prohibited them from masturbating and even from changing baby girls' diapers lest their demon lust be stirred. Instead of having sex with the cult's other males, Koresh commanded his brides of Christ to come straight to papa. "To lie with me is to lie with God," he rationalized. "To bear a child with me is the greatest gift a woman can give her God. I am Jesus Christ returned with a big dick. I will sleep with your wife, and I will rate her on God's scale. All women want to sleep with God. I took a thirteen-year-old girl. She was trembling and afraid. Her heart was pounding like a hunted, scared animal. That's how all women sound when they make love to me for the first time." Big Dave fucked them all, mothers and daughters, eighty-year-olds down to preteens. His blessed bone sired at least seven, and perhaps as many as fifteen, mini-Koreshes.

And when those little buggers misbehaved, they were hauled off to the "spanking room," where Yahweh's righteousness was meted out with a paddle inscribed, "IT IS WRITTEN." Older folks who strayed also received the paddle. If they were especially naughty, they were forced to submerge themselves in a waste-filled cesspool and then forbidden to bathe. People sometimes had to learn the hard way that sin stinks.

Koresh had assumed sovereignty over the Branch Davidians—an offshoot of the Seventh-Day Adventists that focuses on the book of Revelation and dates back to the 1930s—during a 1987 gun battle with rival cultists. And if there was one thing he liked more than a moist gash or a cold brew, it was a well-oiled assault rifle. In the midst of his Bible lessons, which sometimes lasted fifteen hours, he would pass his personal AK-47 among his followers and admonish them to touch it. It was rumored that he had stashed a million rounds of ammo within his military-style compound on the wind-swept central Texas prairie. There were also intelligence reports that the cult owned two .50-caliber machine guns, a pair of "Street-Sweeper" shotguns, sixty handguns, twenty-six M-1 rifles, forty-four AK-47s, and one hundred and twenty-three AR-15/M-16s. In the seventeen months preceding February, 1993, the Branch Davidians had spent nearly two hundred thousand dollars to arm the seventy-seven-acre estate Koresh dubbed "Ranch Apocalypse." Girding himself for the battle of Armageddon—which, inexplicably, had switched its playing field from the Middle East to Waco, Texas—Koresh trained twenty or so "Mighty Men" as a Waffen-SS for the Lamb of God. The Mighty Men slept with guns at their bedsides and sometimes doled out beatings to the disobedient. Beyond Koresh's elite corps, all adult cultists were required to train with rifles, and even the children were obliged to watch endless Vietnam movies with the understanding that they were "training films."

Finally, on February 28, 1993, Satan came a-knockin'. Roughly a hundred Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms agents approached the compound to deliver arrest warrants for weapons violations. Various sources had led them to believe that Koresh was hoarding supplies with which he could manufacture hand grenades and convert his assault rifles into machine guns. However, the omniscient Lamb was tipped off to the raid. He told his flunkies that "the Assyrians are coming" and instructed them to man their stations. When the ATF soldiers expressed their intentions to enter the compound, they were met with gunfire resembling a plague of locusts. During a forty-five-minute gunfight, four agents died and fifteen more were injured. Six cultists were killed. Koresh reportedly received a bullet wound to his abdomen.

With dead Davidian bodies slowly rotting inside the compound, the standoff began. Deprived of electricity and running water, cult members supped from mountains of K rations. Unable to use their toilets, they tossed their anointed droppings out the front door. Koresh, though, was still able to plug his guitar into emergency generators and launch into one of his eschatological jam sessions. On March 2, he threatened to strap himself with grenades, stroll out of the building, and blow himself up in front of TV cameras. After kissing the Koresh kids goodbye, he suddenly backed out of his brilliant plan.

Around the same time, he offered to surrender if officials would broadcast his hour-long taped message on local radio. When it was broadcast, he suddenly reneged, explaining that God had told him to stay put. Later in March, he said he'd end the stalemate if he'd be allowed to preach to his believers while in jail. In a hand-delivered letter, the FBI conceded. Koresh reportedly balled up the letter and threw it away. He had allegedly expressed to certain operatives his deathly fear of having his sacred buttocks reamed by jailhouse thugs.

The exasperated feds began employing psywar tactics such as beaming high-intensity floodlights into the compound at night and blasting mega-decibel recordings of dentist's drills, Mitch Miller tunes, Tibetan chants, and the shrieks of rabbits being slaughtered. In early April, Koresh promised that the cult would surrender after they celebrated Passover. Once again, he broke his promise. He then vowed to break the impasse after he completed a manuscript on the seven seals of Revelation. But the epistles he sent to government officials on April 10 and 11 indicate he was primed for a showdown. "My seven thunders are about to be revealed," he warned in a missive signed "Yahweh Koresh." He predicted an earthquake and flood around Lake Waco and advised the armies assembled against him to "Fear me, for I have you in my snare."

After more than seven weeks of enduring such bullshit grandstanding, the feds decided it was time to move in on the stubbly messiah. At five-fifty-five a.m. on April 19, they phoned Koresh's top aide and warned that specially equipped tanks were approaching and would soon be squirting tear gas into the compound. The aide responded by ripping the phone off the wall and throwing it out the front window. Within

minutes, an M-60 tank was ramming huge holes in the compound walls. Cultists answered with a quick blast of gunfire and then scrambled to put on their gas masks. Throughout most of the morning, the federal tanks rammed and gassed, gassed and rammed. The Davidians, inured to the siege mentality, reportedly went calmly about their chores while sheetrock fell from the walls.

SUICIDE

Around five minutes after twelve, a puff of smoke appeared above Ranch Apocalypse. One FBI agent testified that he saw someone inside the building cupping his hands as if lighting a fire. After an explosion, the grounds were engulfed in an unholy ball of flame. Although officials expected cultists to stream from the building, only a few did, and even those resisted attempts to save them. Within a half-hour, all that remained of the giant complex was a small concrete bunker. Eerily, the Branch Davidian flag still flapped atop it. The whole scene recalled the passage in Revelation where there was "silence in heaven about the space of half an hour" after the seventh seal was opened, followed by "fire mingled with blood."

It would take officials weeks to wade through the ashes, the charred bones, the smell of dead fanatics. Some of the carcasses had been burned so badly, their faces were reduced to powder. An original body count of eighty-six was later downscaled to seventy-two and then up to ninety-six, although officials conceded that some of the bodies could have escaped detection because they were nothing more than dust. There were whispers that the Mighty Men had injected the cult's children with poison and shot adults who had tried to escape. Forensic analysis revealed that several of the dead showed evidence of bullet wounds to the skull. Among those that did was the skull of David Koresh, who at thirty-three died at the same age as Jesus.

Conspiracy theorists will squabble well into the next century about what actually happened at Rancho Koresho. The FBI claims to have aerial evidence that three separate fires were lit in the compound within a two-minute period. Arson investigators concluded that the fires were "intentionally set." Nine cult members survived, with most of them giving independent accounts that a federal tank had tipped over a kerosene lantern, which in turn ignited haystacks the cult was using for barricades. Whatever the truth is, Koresh's actions had until that point betokened a strong suicidal urge. The latest word is that isolated pockets of Davidians nationwide are regrouping in anticipation of Koresh's feedback-drenched return from the heavens.



We all spend our lives reading from a procession of geological and social teleprompters.

Withdraw all human interaction, remove the sun, moon, and all temperature fluctuations, and we rapidly lose our way. Like a talk-show host confronted with technical difficulties, we are forced to ad-lib ourselves out of a big black vacuum.



When Veronique Le Guen volunteered for a scientific experiment requiring her to spend an indefinite period alone in a cave two hundred and sixty-two feet beneath the ground, she probably didn't bargain that a part of her soul would never emerge from the darkness. She knew she'd be aiding sensory-deprivation research, but she more than likely had her sights set on a world record and the resultant publicity. On August 10, 1988, the thirty-two-year-old Frenchwoman plunged down the limestone-coated throat of the Valat-Nègre cavern into a small grotto where she'd spend the next hundred and eleven days. Into the fifty-degree environment she brought canned food, bottled water, nine hundred books, and a stuffed animal. A Radio Shack's worth of wires were pasted on her head and torso to monitor bodily functions. She ran through daily handwriting and motor-coordination tests. Via a pulley, she sent piss, blood, and saliva samples up to ground level. For nearly four months, she was a Gallic mole-woman cocooned in a dank, refrigerated uterus.

Little by little, and then in great leaps, her normal bodily rhythms were knocked off-kilter. She developed a warped sleep cycle, on some "days" spending forty waking hours followed by thirty-four hours snoozing. She took one eighteen-hour "nap" she perceived as lasting only minutes.

Diary entries reveal a mind that was gradually losing its grip: "I feel calm, too calm. I feel the sort of lucidity that fills your soul just after—or is it just before?—a great catastrophe.... My only horizon is darkness, my sky, emptiness. I am buried alive, trapped in an inhuman world.... I am not here, but I am analyzing myself all the same. I feel evil all around me. This cave doesn't have any meaning

anymore. My soul is dissolving into the humidity. I let myself slide into unreality. Nothing is true anymore. I have a feeling that a terrible evil has gotten hold of me: insanity."

When she finally surfaced on November 29 into a hailstorm of press-camera flashbulbs, she had broken the world's record for female cave-divers. But she was never to fully mesh with the realm of sunlight and other humans, a fact she noted in her book, *Alone at the Bottom of the Abyss*. Her sleep cycle was forever wrecked. Her friends and relatives said she seemed emotionally adrift. In a radio interview on January 15, 1990, she spoke of an internal "time bomb." Two days later, she took an overdose of barbiturates in a truck parked on a Paris street. Down in that cave, Veronique had brushed up against a vast, immovable blackness, a great sleepy void to which she finally yielded.

SUICIDE NOTE:

(Addressed to her husband):

The ten years of happiness I spent with you are worth an entire lifetime, but my life is over. I don't have anything left to do on this earth. I'm afraid of death, but I'm even more afraid of life. Forgive me. You are free. Carry on. I love you horribly.

#52

Diane Linkletter

KIDS DO THE DARDEST THINGS
ON ACID

Art Linkletter was the voice of reactionary reason back in the turbulent sixties, the silent majority's super-mellow father confessor. He was the easygoing paternal type who calls you into his den, fragrant with rum-and-maple pipe tobacco, and shows you his model-ship collection. He had no discernible talent apart from a certain homespun cuddliness, but it was enough to make him a TV superstar. He was a warm teddy bear of a man, someone whose mildly rising flatulence was as reassuring as the smell of butter cookies baking in the oven.

So when his daughter Diane's LSD-crazed suicide hit the news, Art must have felt like plucking out his eyeballs and hiding them in the cupboard. It was all the more tragic because Diane, a young Caucasian girl with a heart as wide as the big blue sky, a girl ready to snuggle puppies, was a mere damsel of twenty. We've all heard third-hand accounts of the underground scene, particularly the notorious acid "flash-back," where microscopic, fire-breathing winged Buddhas tear at your genitals and rummage through your record collection, leaving everything out of alphabetical order. Ever since she experimented with LSD in the spring of 1969—an act she deeply regretted and admitted to her father was nothing short of *stupid*—Diane had been rattled with flashbacks, each one rolling over her like an earthquake's aftershocks. On October 4, 1969, the Big One hit. Diane, her eyes two spinning



peppermint candies, her perky bouffant hairdo a thicket of worms, jumped from the window of her tenth-story Hollywood apartment.

Ironically, Art was at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, all set to deliver a lecture on "Our Permissive, Affluent Society," when he received word of Diane's death plunge. He flew home and marshaled the Linkletters together. The family decided that it would best serve the nation's interests if they were honest about what drove their little bumpkin to kill herself. They knew there was a stigma attached to the fact that drugs had touched their family, but their testimony might be able to steer some misguided youngster away from the evil microdot.

"I immersed myself in the drug scene," Art was to write in a nakedly confessional article for *Good Housekeeping*. "...I'm told that a shot of 'speed' can be like a full body orgasm." Art came to realize that drug experimentation was a normal—but potentially lethal—part of adolescent curiosity: "So a bunch of them climb into a car with a few joints they bought from an older kid and they hide out just as you and I used to do to smoke corn silk behind the barn." Art, you *delinquent*! He concluded that Diane's belly-flop onto concrete wasn't technically a suicide—she "had been murdered by drugs."

HONORABLE MENTION

On a Wednesday night in August, 1971, Connecticut resident Robert Boutin, twenty, confessed to his mom that he had taken LSD "five or six times over the period of four months" and was terrified about its possible long-term effects. A few hours later, he dynamited himself.

#53

Matthew Lovat

WHAT WOULD JESUS DO
IN THIS SITUATION?

Christianity is a religion custom-made for self-

hatred, preaching that our innate filthiness is the only thing which caught God's fancy in the first place. It is the masochist's ultimate S&M projection, with the world ruled by a cruel master who laughs at his slaves' piteous cries for mercy. To become worthy before such a pure, humorless God, one must render oneself worthless. A good Christian must mortify the flesh, flog his ego, lower himself to grovel amid the maggots. Deeply ashamed of their bodily functions, suspicious of their instincts, good Christians must squelch pleasure at every turn. The worse one feels, the better it is. Christians are humble shit-eaters who rip out their hair and slap themselves in the face in the hopes that it will please their master. They'll kneel on wooden planks, mumbling prayers until their knees bleed. In an advanced stage of the disease, they'll go Christ one better and crucify themselves.

Matthew Lovat was a very, very good Christian. The Italian peasant loved Jesus so much, he sliced off his own balls in a spurt of religious passion. The townsfolk of Casale, apparently not as strong in their faith, subsequently banned Matthew from entering the local church. He relocated to Venice, where he became a shoemaker. In 1799, using the tools of his trade, he fashioned a wooden cross from his bed frame. He took up his cross and carried it into the street, where he began nailing his left foot into the wood. A group of reprobates stopped him from going further. A prophet without honor in Venice, Matthew returned to Casale.

Over the next three years, he stubbornly built another crucifix. Toiling away in a cramped third-story apartment, he fastened a rope on top of his new cross and tied the loose end to a beam in the ceiling. Uncertain whether the cross would bear his weight even if he were nailed to it, he placed it within a net. He then moved the foot of the cross near the edge of his windowsill so it pointed out toward the street.



One morning in 1802, he placed a crown of thorns around his head, securing it deep enough to draw blood. Naked except for a small handkerchief serving as a loincloth, he entered the net and nailed his feet to the base of the cross. He then tied his waist to the shaft. As a final touch before hurling himself out over the street, he gouged himself in the side with a shoemaker's tool, simulating Christ's spear wound. With his hands, he pushed the cross through his open window, and it lurched out over the street, with Lovat attached, suspended by the rope he had tied to the ceiling. Foreseeing difficulty, he had already made two holes in the horizontal beam where his arms were to be nailed. He successfully hammered his right arm into the wood, but although he had taken the precaution of driving a nail through his left palm, he was unable to push it into the cross.

Gazing upward at the bizarre performance, townsfolk were stupefied. A few of them regained their composure long enough to rush up three flights and pull Lovat back into his bedroom. When doctors later asked him the reason for his attempted self-crucifixion, his pious response was, "The pride of man must be mortified; it must expire on the cross." Reluctant to give him a third chance, authorities institutionalized Lovat. In the grand tradition of Christ, who fasted forty days and forty nights, Lovat starved himself to death.

HONORABLE MENTION

Arthur A. McDonald of Superior, Wisconsin, snapped two pictures of himself tied to a giant blue-and-red cross in his parlor before hanging himself with a silk noose in July, 1921. A friend explained that McDonald wished to be seen as "the savior of the I.W.W. [Industrial Workers of the World]."

HONORABLE MENTION

Leoni Stuvonal of Bayonne, New Jersey, her power of logic said to be "dethroned by religious studies," sought to mimic Christ in July, 1889. She stripped naked and hammered some hat pins through one hand and a foot, attaching herself to a door. She survived and shuffled off to Bellevue.

HONORABLE MENTION

In the Easter season of 1892, a German named Puschke tied his feet together, nailed them into the ground, drove a nail through his left hand and into the dirt, then stabbed himself repeatedly in the chest with his right hand. He survived.

#54

Paul Lozano

MOMMY, WHY DO YOU
CHARGE ME BY THE HOUR?

Make no mistake about it—psychiatrists are

more contemptible than priests, lawyers, politicians, and corporate executives, perhaps even performance artists. With their smug insistence that they know what's good for you far better than you do, that any objections you might have are simply a desperate gesture of guilt transference, they act as cult leaders in a two-member cult. The only difference is that cult leaders aren't legally empowered to prescribe Thorazine. To give someone power over another person's fragile psyche is akin to placing a buzzard over a dead body and saying, "Watch this for me, will ya?" First thing we do, let's kill all the psychiatrists.



Having grown up as the son of a Hispanic construction contractor, Paul Lozano felt socially displaced at Harvard Medical School. Seeking to lessen his anguish, he began weekly therapy sessions with a therapist named Margaret Bean-Bayog in July, 1986. "School is fine," he allegedly told her, "but quite sad." Bean-Bayog terminated Lozano as a patient in June, 1990, reportedly telling Paul's father: "Your son is eighty percent suicidal. You know this runs in the family. He'll probably kill himself. I've done all I can for him." Ten months later, after showering and sprinkling himself with cologne, Paul sat down at his desk in front of some open medical books. Into his arm he stuck a needle filled with what he knew was enough cocaine to kill him. Dr. Bean-Bayog's prediction had come true.

When sharp questions were raised concerning the admittedly "unique" method she had used to treat her patient, the therapist replied that "Mr. Lozano was the most severely mentally ill and suicidal" person ever placed under her care, someone who had confided to her about "his problems with alcohol and drug abuse, his sociopathic symptoms, such as lying, stealing, and cheating, and his overwhelming feelings of anxiety and rage." She hinted that Lozano had been subject to emotional, physical, and possibly even sexual abuse as a child. Over the course of his treatment, she had him hospitalized

several times, at one point refusing to tell his parents where she had sent him.

But Lozano's family, and even one of Bean-Bayog's colleagues, denied that Paul suffered from any severe emotional distress until he started therapy. They pointed to the psychiatrist's odd therapeutic technique, one in which she played an understanding mother to Paul's needy little boy. She gave him a stuffed animal, kiddie books, and flash cards, one of which read, "I'm your mom and I love you and you love me very, very much. Say that ten times." In her notes, she expressed sorrow over childhood abuse she said Lozano had suffered: "I am in a heap, sweating and disheveled, and so sad I can't feel any boundaries to it. . . . So this is what they did to you. . . . [I feel] sad, terribly sad, for the baby, the boy, the eight-year-old boy." During the period in which Paul was under Bean-Bayog's care, Lozano's sister sensed that he was regressing, evidenced by an itty-bitty baby voice and even a childlike gait.

Far more disturbing were allegations of a sexual relationship between doctor and patient. One of the flash cards Bean-Bayog had given Lozano reportedly read, "I'm going to miss so many things about you, the closeness and the need and the phenomenal sex." Lozano allegedly told other psychiatrists that he and Bean-Bayog had slept together and that during certain counseling sessions, the doctor played with her pussy while he watched. Bean-Bayog was also said to have written a steamy, fifty-five-page sex rant which was found in Lozano's apartment. In her defense, she claimed that Paul had purloined the pornographic epistle.

SUICIDE

Toward the end of their psychoanalytic relationship, when Lozano sensed that Bean-Bayog was about to cut him loose, he reportedly asked her, "Do you know what it is like to hate your mother?" After their breakup, Lozano started seeing a therapist named Barry Gault, who recalls him clutching his stuffed bear and cooing, "I miss Margaret." After a pause, he mewled, "I'm hearing her voice again."

"What is the voice telling you?" Gault asked.

"She's telling me to kill myself," Lozano replied. Since Bean-Bayog surrendered her license to avoid an impending court trial, her guilt or innocence in Paul Lozano's suicide will probably never be legally determined. But Paul was certain that the voice in his head was Margaret's. And he did what every good little baby boy does. He listened to his mommy.

#55

Tina Mancini

HONEY, I PIMPED THE KID

The emotional bond between a mother and her daughter is one of the most special things in nature. A loving mom will gently instruct her little girl about the rigors of menstruation, the



virtues of an intact hymen, and the wily maneuvers of wolflike males. She'll offer advice on how to keep it clean "down there." She'll sew the hem of her little bobbysoxer's prom gown and help her select a suitable floral arrangement. She'll do everything in her power to ensure that her precious debutante is presented to the world in the most auspicious manner possible, that she faces a future as bright as an afternoon sun on a chrome-plated bumper.

So when Tina Mancini's mother forced her seventeen-year-old girl to swing her jugs around in a series of Florida titty bars, it must have come as a bit of a letdown to young Tina. Jiggling her cans in front of drooling old retirees probably wasn't her idea of a coming-out party. Her mother, Theresa Jackson, had forged Tina's birth certificate in order for the girl to dance "legally." Jackson even had the gall to sponge off Tina's income for her own living expenses.

On March 24, 1986, three months after the Fort Lauderdale teen had begun whisking her hooters around like a pair of ostrich eggs for the delight of tipsy lechers, she creamed her brains with one shot from mom's .357 Magnum. In an unprecedented trial, Jackson was charged with creating an environment which drove Tina to kill herself. Jackson's son Rico, himself a stripper, was summoned to testify against his old lady, and the vision of Jackson's dick-swinging offspring on the witness stand obviously didn't help matters. The judge handed Jackson a one-year sentence. "I realize I probably made a lot of mistakes," Jackson told the judge while choking back tears. What could she have meant? Would things have gone better if she had trod the straight-and-narrow and forced her daughter to tongue old men's assholes at five bucks a pop?

#56

Donald Manes

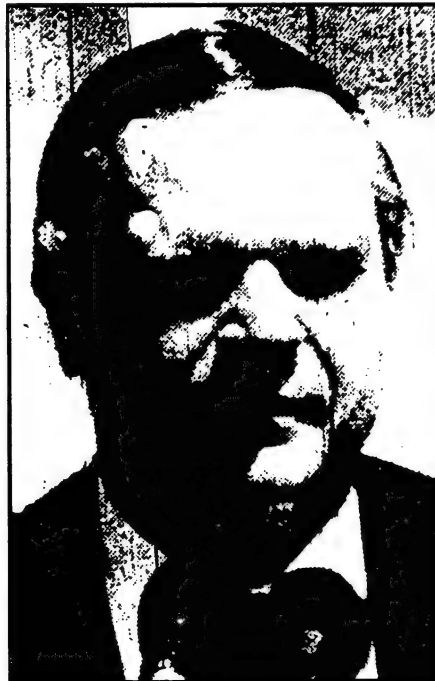
STICK A KNIFE IN ME, I'M DONE

Queens is the most ordinary of New York's five boroughs, a humdrum spread of bricks and asphalt, dirty smokestacks and cruddy eighteen-

wheelers hauling cheese out to Long Island. It's a thick-necked place, home to Archie Bunker and the Mets. Almost without exception, its denizens are forgettable shlumps.

But Queens also has a population greater than that of sixteen individual states, and with the tightly packed blue-collar citizenry come epic tales of graft and mob hits, two-fisted extortion and concrete boots.

For over twenty years, Donald Manes (pronounced "MAN-iss") was a high-muckety-muck in Queens Realpolitik. An unctuous little frog, a humpbacked troll with an oily comb-over, he cut deals and greased palms all the way to the borough presidency. Then one frozen night in January, 1986, as a city-wide bribery and corruption investigation was set to go public, Donald Manes felt his world crashing down on him like a truckload of Mafia cement. After slashing a wrist and ankle, he went for a weaving drive through some dark roads near La Guardia Airport and was finally stopped by police near Shea Stadium. He originally claimed to have been mugged but later retracted that statement and admitted he had cut himself. He resigned as borough president a month later.



On March 10, his supposed best friend accepted a plea bargain in return for testifying against Manes in connection with mail fraud and extortion. Three days later, while talking to his psychiatrist on a phone in his kitchen, Manes pulled out a fourteen-inch carving knife and shoved it deep within his chest, falling belly-up on the floor like a Thanksgiving turkey. A friend later called him "one so corrupt that he chose suicide rather than face the consequences of his crimes." Manes had spent his adult life thinking he had one hand in the cookie jar, only to find it was a sausage grinder instead.

#57

Masada

KOSHER'S LAST STAND

Faced with certain, imminent murder, one's choices in life are quickly whittled down to two: Either surrender your throat lamblike to your conqueror or deny him the satisfaction by killing yourself. Throughout history and in every place they wandered, the Hebrew people have shown a drastically lower suicide rate than their Gentile hosts. When they have committed suicide, particularly en masse, it has usually been in response to pogroms organized by their enemies. In twelfth-century England, rather than suffer at the hands of fanatical Christians, an estimated five hundred Jews killed themselves at once. Facing similar witch hunts in France over the next two centuries, hundreds more died in large-scale orgies of self-termination. Innumerable other Jewish people met a self-appointed end as the Spanish Inquisition's madness rolled through Europe.

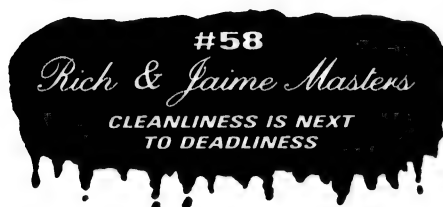
A curious facet of these deaths is that they weren't suicides in the strictest sense. In keeping with the aforementioned cultural distaste for self-cessation, they were actually collaborative executions, with small teams of appointed killers slaying most of the victims, then each other, until the last remaining person had to take his own life. Consciously or not, they emulated the example set by Eleazar Ben Yair and his group of Zealots, who in 73 A.D. committed what might be the largest one-shot mass suicide in history. At a fortress named Masada, nestled on a rocky bluff thirteen hundred feet above the scorching Judean Desert, Eleazar's forces bravely withstood Roman onslaughts for four years.

As fiercely as Eleazar defended Masada, he was outnumbered five-to-one by the Romans, who finally smashed through his outlying wall with a battering ram. Roman forces set fire to the wall and then retreated to their camp for the night, gearing up for a thundering slaughter come morning. Eleazar, fearing that the Romans would torture his men, schtup his women, and ship the kids off to slave camps, recommended mass suicide as a more desirable option. He delivered a spiel about how it was better to be judged by God than the Romans, but the crowd wasn't buying it. He then jabbered for a while

SUICIDE

about the soul's immortality, how the body was merely a "weight" to be cast off, and the listeners swallowed it up like a bite-sized lump of halvah. In the manic wave which seized the fortress, each family's patriarch slashed the throats of his wife and children before baring his own gizzard for a ten-man execution squad. After tossing the corpses in a heap and torching them, the ten remaining warriors drew lots to see who would kill the other nine. When this was accomplished, the last remaining guy set the entire place ablaze and fell on his sword.

As the sun rose, the Romans, ready for a good rape-and-pillage fiesta, entered Masada only to find nine hundred and sixty burnt carcasses. It was so quiet, you could hear a shekel drop. The Romans let loose with war whoops, which drew the only survivors—two women and five children—out of a cave in which they'd been hiding. The women explained what had happened. Hmm—five thousand horny Romans, two broads. The historians aren't clear on the matter, but I'd lay good money that those two chicks had Latin sperm oozing out of their ears by nightfall.



It was an invigorating Rocky Mountain weekend in October, 1992, the sky a big blue wash bucket filled with disinfectant. Rich and Jaime Masters spent most of it fiddling around their maroon-and-green house near Denver. On Saturday,



Rich mowed the lawn while Jaime dusted, vacuumed, and generally spruced up their tri-level brick home. In their mailbox, they left a note advising the mailman to call the sheriff, along with a cellular phone and fifty dollars "for your trouble." With their blinds drawn, they fastidiously arranged their driver's licenses, wills, and a list of family members' phone numbers. Then, at some point between Sunday and Monday, they covered their U-shaped sofa with a shower curtain, a blanket, and a quilt. The middle-aged couple then sat down gently so as not to disturb their makeshift slipcovers. They each lifted a gun, both of which had undoubtedly been cleaned and oiled, pointed it to their heads while facing each other, and sent their frontal lobes a-flyin', trying as best they could under the circumstances not to make a mess.



For most of her adult life, Leanita McClain stewed like a big brown pot of prunes with

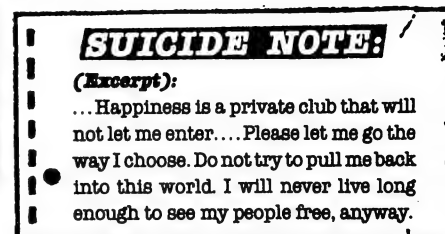


hatred for Chi-town's honkies. The first black person ever to ascend to the *Chicago Tribune's* editorial board, she made a name for herself by writing articles that pulsed with race-baiting vituperation. A gifted scribe, she was adept at putting those lily-livered, needle-dicked, skinny-lipped, straight-haired, narrow-nosed, pig-skinned, no-chin, can't-dance cracker bastards back into the caves from whence they came. "How Chicago Taught Me to Hate Whites" was the title of an op-ed piece she wrote for the *Washington Post* on July 24, 1983. In the article, she detailed her frustration over a rancorous, racially charged Chicago mayoral election. She spoke disdainfully about hearing voices on the radio mention "'the blacks.' ... It is the article that offends. The words are held out like a foul-smelling sock transported two-fingered at the end of an outstretched arm to the hamper while the nose is pinched shut. 'The blacks.' It would make me feel like machine-gunning every white face on the bus."

In her professional life, though, she was constantly forced to rub elbows with Mister Charley. She had risen from housing projects on the South Side to a powerful position on the Midwest's most influential paper and thus had to offer at least token politeness to the melanin-deficient. At parties, earnest Caucasians gathered around her as if she were a circus curiosity. "I am burdened daily with showing whites that blacks are people," she wrote in a 1980 guest piece for *Newsweek*. "I am, in the old vernacular, a credit to my race.... My brothers' keeper, and my sisters', though many of them have abandoned me because they think that I have abandoned them.... I assuage white guilt. I disprove black inadequacy and prove to my parents' generation that their patience was indeed a virtue."

But despite her bold proclamations of blackness, even her genetic makeup was indeterminate. She was what less sensitive folks would call a "high yella": light skin, green eyes, and a wispy puff of blonde in otherwise nappy hair. It was this uncomfortable sense of racial limbo, of straddling two worlds, which ultimately proved unbearable for McClain. In May, 1984, only two months after *Glamour*

magazine named her one of America's "ten most outstanding working women," she ate a monster dose of amitriptyline and fell asleep for the last time. The whole thing leaves us feeling sad. Now who's going to make Chicago's whites feel guilty?



It was 1931 in Mexico City, and Señor Medrano wanted to die so badly, he could taste it. He wanted to die the same way a fifteen-year-old boy wants a big pair of tits slapping him in the face. He craved death the same way a female prisoner at the end of a ten-year bid craves a thick, veiny donkey dick. He hungered for an end to his life the same way that Bill Clinton salivates over a Denny's all-you-can-eat special.

He tried to throw himself under an oncoming train. Someone physically restrained him. He tried shooting himself. The gun jammed. He tried inhaling kitchen gas. Family members rushed in and stopped him. He threw himself in a river. Someone pulled him out. He leapt from a roof. The fall didn't kill him, but he suffered a fatal heart attack while falling. That way, no future good Samaritans would get pasted in the face with Elmer's Glue while rescuing Medrano from a failed autoerotic asphyxiation.



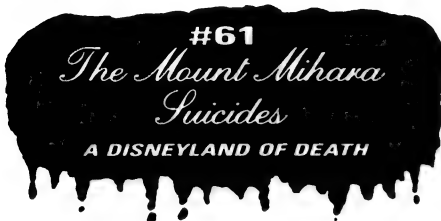
Tokyo resident Hiromasa Sato couldn't kill himself with cyanide. He couldn't kill himself by hanging, even after six attempts. He threw himself in front of trains on eight different occasions, surviving with nary a scratch. Hoping that the state would be able to execute him better than he could, he sought the death penalty by attempting to derail a train and kill some commuters. His scheme failed to work, and in December, 1949, Sato was brought before a judge, who ordered him to be institutionalized. "That's foolish," Sato told the judge. "I just wanted to be sentenced to death."



Over the course of one day in 1948, a Los Angeles man bungled several desperate attempts to end his life. He made six deep

SUICIDE

gashes in his throat with a butcher knife. It didn't kill him. He jammed the knife's handle into a wall at chest level and sprinted into the blade three times. It didn't kill him. He gulped down a bottle of poison and turned on his kitchen's gas jets. Sniffing fumes, his neighbors phoned the cops, who rescued him.



Capitalism is a magical economic system, dipped in honey and smothered in coconut flakes. Unlike more high-minded wealth-distribution schemes, it ignores what people need and gives them what they want. Even though their desires may be unsavory, teeming with bacteria and swarming with flies, capitalism delivers it on a hot, steaming plate. And what people want more than anything, even more than warm restrooms and loose shoes, is to watch other people die.

This fact has never been celebrated with more carnivalesque élan than during a Japanese suicide wave in the mid-thirties. It began humbly enough one day in January, 1933, when two schoolgirls rode a small steamship to the desolate isle of Oshima, roughly sixty miles from Tokyo. They ascended Mount Mihara to view the island's only attraction, an active volcano. As they peered down into the belching, sulfurous pit, one of the girls, Mieko Ueki, related a curious myth to her friend, Masako Tomita. She recounted the Japanese legend which promises that all those who leap into the volcano's mouth immediately evaporate and ascend directly to heaven. Mieko further explained that the mountain was a place of staggering beauty and thus an ideal spot from which to leave the planet. Masako tried in vain to dissuade her friend from jumping and finally agreed to keep mum about the suicide for at least five years. After giving a ceremonial bow, Mieko plunged into the flaming crater. Masako took a steamship home.

Within weeks, she broke her promise and squealed to another schoolgirl, who decided that she just *had* to leap into the lava. Masako went along with her, but as she trudged down the mountain after her second friend's death jump, Oshima villagers noticed she was distraught and unaccompanied by the girl with whom she had arrived. A bit of police interrogation pried the whole story out of the sniveling little geisha.

The Japanese press pounced on the two Mount Mihara suicides like alley cats fighting over a chunk of tempura. By April, Masako was dead, allegedly from exhaustion, but several

periodicals suggested that she had taken her own life due to the strain. Mihara's crater, until that point a rarely visited dot on the map, became an overnight tourist trap. The island's shipping company ditched their dinky steamer, which had chugged out to Oshima three times weekly, in favor of two new cruise ships each making daily excursions. Over the next two years, five cab companies, fourteen hotels, and twenty restaurants sprouted like bamboo shoots along the island's edge. Whereas only two photographers had previously worked the island, the increased tourist flow permitted forty-seven cameramen to make a living at the crater's edge. Camels and horses were imported to haul tourists across a mile-wide stretch of desert which encircles the volcano. In a marketing stroke straight out of Wet 'n' Wild, a quarter-mile "shoot the chute" slide was installed, permitting sightseers to glide down the mountainside after gawking at the infernal suicide pit.

Six persons leapt into the hellish vapors on a single Sunday in April, 1933. On the same day, twenty-five others tried to jump but were stopped by police. As more and more camera-slinging rubbernecks flocked to the island, rare became the day when at least one person didn't try to leap into the bubbling lava. One day, after hours had passed without any action, a sadistic tourist bellowed, "I dare someone to jump!" Within seconds, someone jumped.

Japanese officials had tallied one hundred and forty-three Mount Mihara suicides by the end of 1933, but other estimates put the total as high as five hundred. Another hundred and sixty-seven people dove to their deaths in 1934. That year, an additional twenty-nine people who had been restrained from leaping into the volcano jumped into the ocean while sailing home.

One Tokyo tabloid sold a lot of papers by staging a high-profile expedition into the belly of the beast. The publicity stunt was ostensibly intended to disprove the myth that Mihara's suicides instantly vaporized and flew heavenward. Wearing an oxygen mask and encased in a tiny steel egg suspended by a cable, a reporter plummeted twelve hundred and fifty feet into the volcano's mouth. Although he claimed to have seen a number of scorched bodies, he failed to return with any tangible proof. The legend intensified.

Another six hundred and nineteen Mihara suicides were recorded in 1936. Government functionaries erected a barbed-wire fence around the volcano's rim. Guards were stationed at the crater twenty-four hours a day. Seeking to frighten would-be jumpers, an organization called the Mount Mihara Anti-Suicide League installed mirrors which gave visitors a clear view into the crater's searing fury.

Partly as a result of these preventive measures and partly due to a fickle public's limited attention span, interest in "Suicide Mountain"

ebbed. The death knell came in 1955, when it was finally proven that one didn't necessarily die after hurdling into the smoking abyss. When distant wails were heard issuing from the crater's bowels in January, 1955, a police

crew was summoned. Nearly gagging from constant blasts of sulfur fumes, the crew descended several hundred feet down the superheated walls before encountering a bloody, banged-up couple. The dazed, sweaty pair had been there for thirty-three hours after tumbling down onto an outcropping only a few feet from the lake of fire. Using ropes, police hoisted them up to safety. When people realized that Mihara was merely a red-hot bowl of igneous soup instead of a one-way ticket to heaven, the killer mountain's luster was gone. History's greatest amusement park shut down for business.



There is nothing on earth more painful than unrequited love. It hurts less to have a refrigerator dropped on your testicles than to love someone and not have them love you back. The lonesome ache of knowing that one's innamorata will never share your dreams, never hold your hand and watch a sunset, never eat cotton candy with you and give you blow jobs under the Ferris wheel, can be devastating to the frail of heart.

Karl Millar was probably a bit too loving for his own good. A young office worker in the evergreen Austrian burg of Szekelykoczd, he felt he had finally found the perfect bun in which to wrap his Vienna sausage. She was to be his little *Liebchen*, a mountain maiden who'd churn his milk into butter all night long.

To seal their Alpine love, he gave her an



engagement ring in October, 1925. But the slippery *Frauenzimmer* gave it back, snubbing Millar's winsome wiener. He stuffed the ring, along with an explosive charge, down the barrel of a large-bore revolver and held the gun to his chest. Pulling the trigger, he shot the ring straight through himself, leaving a big hole in his heart.

#63 Yukio Mishima A GUTSY MOVE

Everywhere Yukio Mishima looked around his native Japan, he saw Western materialism's creeping poison. He saw it in the polyester slacks and alligator shoes, the pomaded hair and filtered cigarettes, the shoddy automobiles and throbbing neon signs. He saw the sons of samurai dressed up in little Jerry Vale monkey suits performing watered-down lounge music, and he felt ashamed.

So at age thirty, he picked up a set of weights and began pumping iron like a motherfucker. With locked jaws and knitted brows, he went at it with the squirrely discipline of a Japanese G. Gordon Liddy. It got to the point where he could roll marbles up and down the ripples in his stomach. He achieved such mastery over his musculature, he was probably able to bend over and aim fecal pellets at a bull's-eye twenty yards away. In other words, he was a ticking time bomb.



As perhaps the most famous Japanese novelist of his time, he wrote with the slashing power of a Ginsu knife. He crossed swords with his life's themes—national loyalty, cruel love, and the unbending moral code of imperial warriors—the way a table-side chef at Benihana slices and dices a finely marbled slab of beef. He viewed a heroic death as infinitely favorable to



Yukio Mishima (top) and Masakatsu Morita (bottom). Actually, neither of them qualifies as a "bottom," since their bottoms were removed with swords.

a compromised life. "If you want your beauty to endure," he wrote at age thirty-four, "you must commit suicide at the height of your beauty." Six years later, he scripted and starred in a short film titled *Patriotism: The Rite of Love and Death*. Playing an army officer who fails in his attempt to stage a government coup, Mishima eviscerated himself on camera.

But apparently doubtful that art alone could stop Nippon's slide down the slopes of decadence, he spent two hundred thousand dollars to form an eighty-five-member private army he called the *Tatenokai* ("Shield Society"). Wearing cute little brown suits that Mishima had helped design, his shock troops practiced maneuvers on the foothills of Mount Fuji. Flinging Ninja death stars and chopping at the air, the *Tatenokai* prepared for the return of emperor worship and the expulsion of all those big, hairy Westerners.

On November 25, 1970, Mishima decided that it was time for action. Aided by four of his highest-ranking officers, he broke into the Tokyo office of Japan's Self-Defense Forces and took their commander hostage. After ordering the Thirty-Second Regiment to herd together in a courtyard, he walked onto a balcony and heckled the crowd about how a US-imposed constitution had defanged a once-proud Land of the Rising Sun. Instead of rallying to his cause, the eight hundred or so assembled soldiers blew raspberries and started howling for a sniper to take him out. In a pissy-fit, Mishima stormed back into the general's headquarters. "I came out on

the stage intending to make the audience weep," he told a comrade, "but instead they burst out laughing." Then, in the superannuated tradition of seppuku (better known as hara-kiri in the West), he drew a sword and ripped out his intestines. Immediately thereafter, Mishima's chief lieutenant and rumored butt-buddy Masakatsu Morita lopped off his leader's head with a long steel blade. Morita then disemboweled himself and was decapitated by an underling. Dancing in the clouds above Fujiyama, Mishima is no doubt pleased that the tables have turned and America is now a sprawling colony of Hondas, karaoke bars, and green mustard.

#64 Marilyn Monroe DOWNERS ARE A GIRL'S BEST FRIEND

When an entire generation covets your bleached-blondie muffburger more than world peace or a cure for cancer, does that place too much pressure on you? Can you be blamed for feeling empty if everyone ignores your acting ability and zeroes in on your golden bush? Should you kill yourself if others are blind to your inner beauty and see you as a vagina with lipstick?

Ever since she was eleven and started busting out all over her sweater, men looked at Norma Jean Baker as little more than a blowup doll who breathed. They didn't seem to care that dad had driven away on a motorcycle while mom was pregnant with her. They didn't flinch when she told them she had almost been suffocated with a pillow while still an infant. It didn't bother them at all that her mommy didn't feed her or change her diapers, that the woman wandered around the house talking to herself and had to be institutionalized after attacking a friend with a knife. They seemed bored to hear that she had been tossed among twelve different sets of foster parents, ranging from psycho-Christians who told her she would burn in hell to brain-damaged boozehounds who let her play with



Boop-boop-a-dol

empty whiskey bottles. They acted unconcerned when she tearfully recounted how a foster parent had raped and impregnated her. They only wanted to see that pussy, which for them was like cruising down the Gold Coast.

When she became an internationally desired honeycomb named Marilyn Monroe, it didn't seem to ease the pain. She spent torturous nights sucking on the limp garden snails of paunchy movie producers. She waded through unhappy conjugal unions with dumb-as-a-log Joe DiMaggio and toadstool-ugly Arthur Miller. Although she was said to have willingly fetched the bones of Frank Sinatra and Bobby Kennedy, neither of them pledged to adopt the sad little puppy. Trying her hand at poetry, she emitted the anguished yip of an abused poodle:

*Help, help
Help, I feel life coming closer
When all I want is to die.*

By 1962, she had developed a rep around Hollywood as a pill-popping prima donna, a troublesome tantrum-thrower who had twice attempted suicide. She was notorious for showing up late and flubbing her lines. Drug addiction seemed to be eating away at whatever brain she had. When she was fired during the filming of *Something's Got to Give* in June, conventional wisdom had it that at thirty-six, Marilyn Monroe was pretty much finished.

The official version of what happened on Saturday, August 4, goes something like this: At around five-fifteen p.m., she spoke with her shrink, Ralph Greenson, complaining of depression. Greenson suggested that she take a stroll on the beach. Marilyn then chatted via telephone with actor Peter Lawford, who invited her to a poker party at his bungalow. She

demurred, then later called him back, and Lawford was struck by the finality in her voice: "I really don't think I can come down tonight," she reportedly murmured. "Will you say goodbye to Pat [Lawford's wife] and to Jack [Kennedy] and to yourself, because you're a nice guy." When Lawford tried to snap her out of it, she whispered, "You've all been so nice to me," and hung up. Lawford said he tried to call her back but kept getting busy signals. At around eight p.m., Marilyn said, "Good night, honey," to her maid Eunice Murray and closed the bedroom door. She put a Sinatra record on the turntable. Within moments, she received a telephone call from an unnamed stranger.

When Eunice noticed a light emanating from under Marilyn's bedroom door at around three a.m., she knocked a few times but was unable to rouse her. Picking up a fireplace poker, she tiptoed outside and parted the bedroom-window curtains. Seeing Marilyn spread out naked on the bed, face-down with her hand still clutching the phone, Eunice rushed inside and dialed both Greenson and Hyman Engelberg, Monroe's private doctor.

Greenson arrived at three-thirty a.m. Using the fireplace poker to smash through Marilyn's bedroom window, he crawled in and found that the yellow-haired sexpot was dead. Several empty pill bottles were scattered near the bed. Dr. Engelberg arrived about ten minutes later. For unknown reasons, the two physicians waited more than a half-hour before notifying police. Dr. Thomas Noguchi, the "Coroner to the Stars," would list Monroe's death as an overdose from Nembutal and chloral hydrate.

For thirty years, conspiracy buffs have struggled to fill in apparent factual gaps concerning Marilyn's death. Few of them accept the suicide premise. Some have speculated that either the Mafia or the CIA whacked her in a revenge move against the Kennedys. The most popular hypothesis is that Bobby Kennedy either ordered or committed her murder, most likely by

lethal injection. Kennedy was known to have been in Los Angeles around August 4, and witnesses, including Eunice Murray, said that he visited Marilyn the afternoon of her death. It was rumored that Bobby had announced to Marilyn that he'd no longer be seeing her, a revelation which precipitated a shoving match. There were also whispers that Marilyn had planned a press conference the following week to announce their illicit affair if Bobby failed to propose marriage. Since Marilyn's diary—allegedly containing highly confidential, national-security-threatening references to Jimmy Hoffa, Frank Sinatra, South Vietnam's President Diem, and mob boss Sam Giancana—was missing from the death scene, theorists posited that Kennedy had ordered it confiscated.

There were other things which pointed away from a suicide verdict. An intestinal autopsy revealed none of the trademark yellow dye that would be found from ingesting Nembutal. Marilyn was known to require a glassful of water to swallow a single aspirin, let alone forty or fifty pills, yet there was no drinking glass near her body. Rigor mortis and the purple stain of lividity had set in by the time police arrived, indicating that she had been dead for about eight hours. Yet her doctors reported the time of death as just after midnight, a discrepancy of at least four hours. These inconsistencies raise some unsettling questions, but does it really matter? Any way you slice it, the bitch is still dead.

HONORABLE MENTION

On August 14, 1962, a little over a week after the world received news of Marilyn's death, there were twelve suicides in New York City, supposedly a one-day record. During the month after Marilyn kicked, the entire nation's suicide rate rose twelve percent, with several suicide notes mentioning Monroe.



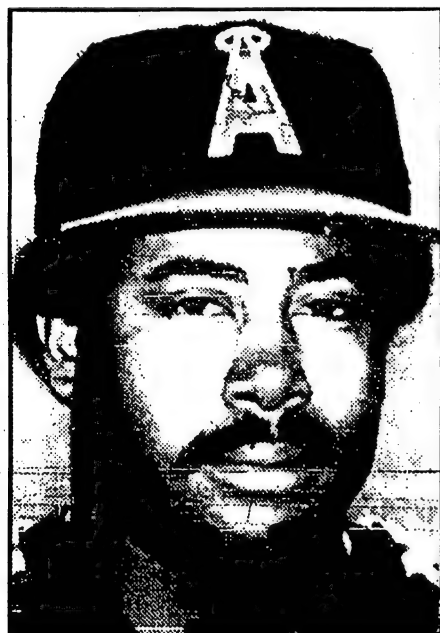
Boop-boop-a-dead.

HONORABLE MENTION

In June, 1989, British model Kay Kent, a Monroe impersonator who underwent plastic surgery so she could more closely resemble Marilyn, was found dead in her bed next to an empty pill bottle. "It seems she took this Marilyn Monroe thing too far this time," quipped an ex-boyfriend.



Ninth inning, two outs, two strikes. One strike away from the World Series. Global adulation. Hot camera lights. Foamy champagne baths. Jewelry. Trophies. Hefty cash bonuses. Lucrative promotional deals. Buoyant groupies wearing nothing but baseball caps. The summit of national sports achievement. The envy of countless sandlot dreamers. Something they'll never be able to take away from you. Donnie Moore wound up, kicked back, and fired a forkball toward home plate, but the batter smacked that ball clean over the left-field fence, shattering Donnie's dreams forever.



He was never able to escape the slow-motion instant replay of THE PITCH that kept playing in his head. He couldn't forgive himself for failing to lift the California Angels into the 1986 World Series. The fans and sportswriters never forgave him, either. When he ascended the mound during the next season, he was showered with catcalls: LO-SERI LO-SERI! To make things worse, he was saddled with injuries, but the management accused him of just being lazy. The Angels fired him in the fall of 1988. At age thirty-five, Donnie found himself back in the minors. But even that wouldn't last. In June, 1989, after seven abysmal performances, he was cut from the lowly Omaha Royals. Donnie Moore's life

was now entirely blanketed under the shadow of THE PITCH.

Tonya Moore fell backward in surprise as her husband fired three .45-caliber bullets into her on July 26, 1989. Before he could explain his actions, Donnie put a thick, hot slug into his head and fell lifeless onto the kitchen floor. Wheezing with pain from a hospital bed, Tonya would later say, "He had a lot of problems, but I still love him.... Donnie wasn't like normal people." Incapacitated by her gunshot wounds, Tonya was unable to attend Donnie's funeral. A family lawyer arranged for Donnie's corpse to be wheeled into a private hospital room so Tonya could pay her last respects. "I told him I love him," Tonya said to a reporter. "I asked, 'Why?'"

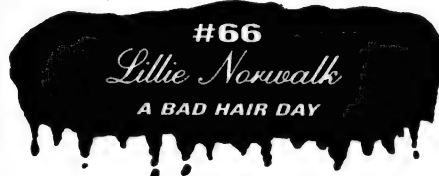
But everyone knew why. "That home run killed him," said Moore's agent, claiming that he had unsuccessfully urged Donnie to see a psychiatrist. "You destroyed a man's life over one pitch," Angels player Brian Downing snarled at reporters. "The guy was just not the same after that.... You buried the guy." So Donnie Moore blew out his brains because of one home-run pitch. Talk about a sore loser.

HONORABLE MENTION

Fourteen-year-old Vivian Tanner stabbed himself to death in January, 1923, when his London schoolmates criticized his performance as a soccer-game referee.

HONORABLE MENTION

On July 4, 1931, someone identified by the *New York Times* only as "a Yugoslav student in St. Nicholas High School" in Belgrade promised to kill himself if the national soccer team lost to Romania. Seconds after being informed that Romania won, 4-2, he shot himself.



Lillie was a girl with hair—long, beautiful hair. Shinin', gleamin', flaxen, waxen, the shit grew down to there. When she strolled the Flatbush streets with those tresses gently blowing like the fronds of a weeping willow, men's trousers swelled like pup tents. She could wrap her hair around a guy's pole and buff it as if she were shining a shoe. She was a friggin' Rapunzel, Lillie was.

But the Brooklyn chippy's succulent mane led her headlong into a life of libertinism. Neighbors spoke of mounting debts and an unchaste love affair. When Lillie entered her bathroom one night in May, 1892, locking the door behind her, she felt that her future was as dead as a frizzy clump of split ends. Leaning over the sink, she tied her hair around one of the faucets. She wrapped it around and around,

with each rotation forcing her throat down against the sink's hard marble edge. The next morning, when her father and two others broke down the bathroom door, Lillie was as cold as a jar of facial cream. The wash basin's pressure had dug a half-inch-deep groove in her throat.

HONORABLE MENTION

Perhaps feeling it was undignified, fifteen-year-old Annabelle Lewis declined her father's offer to ride her into town on his tomato wagon for an appointment to have her hair bobbed. That was on Saturday, September 2, 1926, the weekend before she was to begin her sophomore year at New Jersey's Bridgeton High School. Her father told her not to worry, that she could reschedule her hair-bobbing for Tuesday or Wednesday. That was easy for him to say, but he didn't have to face his classmates without an appropriate coif. On Sunday morning, while the family ate breakfast, Annabelle blew her ratty scalp off with a shotgun.

HONORABLE MENTION

Only three days after Annabelle Lewis's suicide, Parisian shop-owner Charles Serlandie sent a bullet into his heart. He had promised his two daughters, of whose flowing blonde locks he had frequently boasted to customers, that he'd kill himself if they followed the latest trend and had their hair bobbed. They apparently thought he was joking and had their fleeces shorn to the trendy unisex look. Within hours, Serlandie fulfilled his promise.

HONORABLE MENTION

Christopher Holligan of Lancing, England, allowed himself to be run over by a train on February 11, 1966, after the Rolling Stones devotee's legal guardian forced him to undergo a "short back and sides" at the hands of a local barber.



Fiercely clinging to ancient Russian Orthodox rituals, the Old Believers clustered together in small, autonomous communes in the frigid outback country of Russia's northern forests. Their isolated outposts reached the White Sea and up into Siberia, dotting the frozen zones like ticks on a polar bear's ass. These icy hinterlands proved an ideal setting in which to follow the faith of one's forefathers, to worship in a manner untethered by the reformist tendencies of Moscow and Rome's heretical theocrats. In short, it was a perfect breeding ground for religious psychosis.



TIMOTHY PATRICK BUTLER

Suicide

As early as 1620, one Russian monk had prophesied that the Antichrist would reveal himself in 1666. When this didn't happen, certain mystics used numerology to postpone the Great Beast's arrival until somewhere between 1674 and 1700. When the Russian Orthodox hierarchy condemned the Old Believers in 1667 and ordered their texts destroyed, the O.B.s took this as an omen of the last days. Their reason muddled amid the incense-choked haze of Eastern mysticism, they abandoned all earthly duties and prepared for the final judgment. Many of them sat night after night in closed coffins, waiting for the last trumpet to deliver them skyward. Others chose to beat God to the draw and actively pursued their own deaths. Several of them starved themselves to death. Taking a much quicker and more dramatic path, entire congregations of Old Believers huddled together in their wooden churches, soaked the walls with oil, and perished in a baptism of fire. Some even argued that all of Mother Russia should be set ablaze in supplication to an angry Jehovah.

Fully aware that clear-cutting the peasantry would result in free land for those who tarried on earth, roving bunco artists posing as missionaries preached the Old Believers toward extinction. Promising salvation through self-immolation, they herded dodo-brained villagers—sometimes thousands at once—into mass human bonfires. If people resisted, the phony messengers of God bamboozled them into believing that the Antichrist's troops were only miles away and closing in fast. They lured the young'uns into the flames with promises that heaven held forth all the apples and honey they could eat.

The flames started to die out in the early 1700s when people realized that the Antichrist wasn't showing up anytime soon. However, the *mania religiosa* had already claimed an estimated twenty thousand lives. Isolated flare-ups persisted. In 1896, twenty-five Crimean Old Believers buried themselves alive rather than respond to a national census. The Old Believers were said to have given rise to a number of splinter groups, among them the Flagellants, a sex sect who held wild orgies in the name of "Christ's love"; the *Skoptsy*, who believed that women's bodies were an obstacle to God and thus practiced self-castration; and the slap-happy Milk Drinkers, whose shocking heresy was that they imbibed milk during fasts. It can't be proven, but it's probably safe to assume that the Flagellants got more recruits than the other two factions combined.



Amaxosa, a leader of South Africa's Kaffir tribes, convinced his disciples in 1856 that a

mass suicide would resurrect all their legendary ancestors. Approximately fifty thousand tribesmen killed themselves before the Kaffirs decided that Amaxosa was talking shit.



SMASH! went the hotel window, breaking into cubic crystals which sprinkled like granulated sugar onto the pavement ten stories below. Amid the glass fragments was the bloody body of scientist Frank Olson, dead from shock and multiple fractures.

His family could point to very little that would have portended Frank's suicide leap from New York's Statler Hotel sometime after midnight on November 28, 1953. To his wife and four kids, he had seemed stable and generally well-adjusted. There was a sudden black mood which gripped him during the weekend prior to his fall, a weekend he spent at home after attending a conference at the US Army's Special Operations Section at Fort Detrick, Maryland. His widow Alice said he appeared to be a "totally different person" that weekend, just sitting there and staring into space. By the following Saturday, he was dead. All the CIA told Alice at the time was that he experienced a sudden mental collapse and either "jumped or fell."

Twenty-two years later, a Rockefeller commission report contained a reference to a man who in 1953 had plunged to his death from a tenth-floor hotel-room window. He was said to have been suffering "severe side effects" from LSD the CIA had administered without his knowledge. The man wasn't named in the report, but within weeks the Olson family came forward and identified him as Frank Olson. An esteemed civilian researcher, Olson was known to have been working with the United States Army in the area of biological warfare. One night after dinner during a week-long retreat at Fort Detrick, a CIA agent named Dr. Sidney Gottlieb



slipped LSD into a bottle of Cointreau, serving the psychedelic cocktail to an unwitting Olson and seven other men. Roughly twenty minutes after drinking the liquefied acid, the men were informed that they had been dosed in order for technicians to observe their reactions.

The report failed to note Olson's immediate response to the drug, but by the time the conference had ended, Frank was riding a heavy bumper, MAANNNNN. As he sat at home with thunderclouds hovering two inches over his head, he told his wife he was going to resign from the Special Operations Section. However, he phoned her from work on Monday to say that he felt better and had changed his mind. The next day, CIA operatives took him away for a four-day battery of psychological tests during which he was examined by Dr. Harold Abramson, a pioneer in studying LSD's effects on humans. It was advised that Olson be confined to a sanitarium.

On November 27, while arrangements were being made for Olson's psychiatric "vacation," Olson and his CIA escort Robert Lashbrook checked into Manhattan's Statler Hotel. They ate dinner, watched TV, and fell asleep at around ten-thirty p.m. Lashbrook recalls being awakened some time in the middle of the night by a loud crashing noise. He flicked on a lamp, noticed that Olson's bed was empty, and felt the chill breeze coming in from a smashed window.

Beginning in the early fifties, government agencies began slipping acid to unsuspecting American citizens. The tests were ostensibly conducted for "scientific" purposes, but the more pragmatic objective was to see whether enemy troops would get blissed-out and beat their AK-47s into sitars when US fighter planes sprayed them with liquid hallucinogens. In 1973, the feds outlawed drug tests on involuntary American subjects. To our knowledge, there is still no prohibition against force-medicating our enemies, so what are we waiting for? I'd love to see a desertful of once-angry camel jockeys flinging luminous Frisbees and chanting, "Jerry Garcia is God." Then, without hesitation, we'd slaughter them.



Claiming that the CIA "administered certain drugs...or toxic substances" to her husband while he applied for a job with the agency, Mrs. Edith W. Christensen filed suit for eight hundred thousand dollars on May 20, 1966. James Christensen, an ex-Marine, had written, "I feel strong and vigorous and have no complaints" on his CIA job application. He shot himself eight days after his second interview.



Things had gotten so bad, Jerry Olson started to wonder if he'd be more useful to his family dead than alive. His sister had booted him out of her

house, saying the time was ripe for the forty-six-year-old unemployed bar-supply salesman to support himself. Since his eviction, Jerry had puttered around southern Florida in his van, parking on deserted roads at night and curling up for a few fitful hours of sleep. What a miserable way to live, and with Christmas right around the corner.

Then, as if he had been smacked upside the head by one of God's angels, the idea struck him. 'Twas the yuletide, and 'twas better to give than receive, *n'est-ce pas?* Jerry decided to give the gift of life to his older brother Bob, who had been waiting three years for a heart donor. On Sunday, December 17, 1989, Jerry wrote a letter and recorded a tape for his daughter. Jerry, whose devotion to Elvis bordered on the pathological, had named his little girl Lisa Marie in honor of the King's baby buttercup. "I'm tired of everyone saying how much talent I've got," Jerry wrote to the estranged fruit of his loins. "Uncle Bob's got everything to live for. And if they find out he can use it and Uncle Bob wants it, I'm going to be his donor, Lisa. I figure I could do more good for him than myself." On the cassette, he belted out a rectum-wringing rendition of "I'll Be Home for Christmas." He then dropped the tape and letter into an envelope and mailed it to his little princess.

On Monday night, he parked his van outside the emergency room of the University Community Hospital in Tamarac, Florida. He then stuck a gun in his mouth and checked out of Heartbreak Hotel. If he had truly planned to donate his heart to his brother, he was so shortsighted that one has to think he deserved to die. Although only a few feet away from countless medical technicians, he informed no one of his organ-donating intentions. It wasn't until ten minutes after he pulled the trigger that a nurse discovered his body draped over his steering wheel. It was a while later when investigators rummaging through his van finally discovered suicide notes requesting that his heart be shipped to Bob in Illinois. It was far too late, and Jerry's heart was pretty much what Jerry had rightly discerned his own life to be—useless.

SUICIDE NOTE:

(Excerpt):

[There are] too many downs and no ups for me on this roller coaster ride of life.

HONORABLE MENTION

Remorseful that some tainted meth he gave his girlfriend to inject had damaged the girl's kidneys, Michael Hanley of Norwood, Pennsylvania, shot himself in February, 1980. Unaware that tissue samples and kidney size must match for an organ donation to be successful, he left a note instructing that his kidneys be given to his girlfriend. Doctors were unable to use Hanley's posthumous gift of Pennsylvania piss filters.

#70 The "Ozzy Osbourne" Suicides WITHERED BY OZZ?

When I was twelve, I won a four-record set called *Superstars of the Seventies* in a radio contest. Although I liked Alice Cooper and Led Zep, my tiny Catholic mind was drawn to Black Sabbath's "Paranoid." I wrote the lyrics down on a sheet of loose-leaf paper and showed them to my old lady: "Fin-ished with my wom-an cuz she couldn't help me with my mind/Peo-ple think I'm in-sane be-cause I am frown-ing all the time." Figuring that I had written it, mom was ready to have me committed.

Ozzy Osbourne has that kind of effect on parents. "I knew it was the music," said Jack McCollum of Indio, California, after his son John shot himself with a .22-caliber pistol on October 26, 1984. The nineteen-year-old youth, who was wearing stereo headphones when he killed himself, reportedly had spent the hours preceding his death spinning Ozzy records. It was the lyrics to "Suicide Solution," a tune on Osbourne's *Blizzard of Ozz* LP, which raised the elder McCollum's eyebrows: "Breaking laws, knocking doors, but there's no one home/Made your bed, rest your head, but you lie there and moan/Where to hide? Suicide is the only way out/Don't you know what it's really all about?" Claiming that the words were "Satanic-influenced," McCollum filed suit against Ozzy and his record company. Legal papers stated that Osbourne's "violent, morbid, and inflammatory music... encouraged John McCollum to take his own life." A judge decided in favor of Ozzy, but not before taking a swipe at him: "Trash can be given First Amendment protection, too."

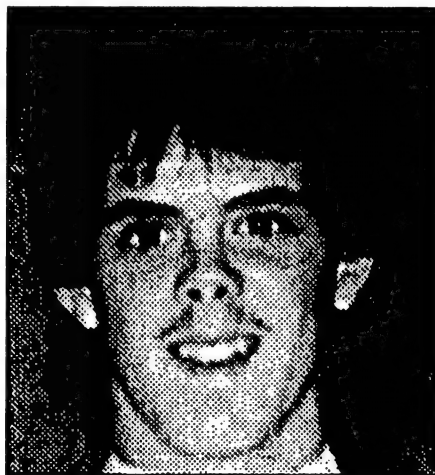
Osbourne was again dragged into court late in 1990, when the parents of two Georgia teens slapped the Beelzebubbian buffoon with a joint lawsuit over two separate suicides occur-

ring in 1986 and 1988. Michael Waller, sixteen-year-old son of a Fitzgerald, Georgia, church deacon, shot himself around two a.m. on May 3, 1986, while his friends watched. According to Waller's father, the boy had been despondent over a recent D.U.I. arrest. Apprehensive about an impending court date, Michael reportedly said, "Pop, I believe old Oz has the solution." When Mr. Waller found Ozzy's *Speak of the Devil* on his son's tape deck after the suicide, he said he finally "understood what the young'un was talking about."

Two years later, seventeen-year-old high-school dropout Harold Matthew Hamilton made off with his friend's gun and car, showing up at his mother's house with a sob story of how a girl he liked had given him the cold shoulder. Obviously agitated, he left after telling mommy that he was going to drive to his sister's house in Augusta, Georgia. A few hours later, Hamilton was found fifty miles outside of Augusta, slumped over in the front seat of his car. A bullet was in his head, and Ozzy's live *Tribute* opus was in the cassette deck.

Although a live rendition of "Suicide Solution" appears on *Tribute*, Hamilton and Waller's attorney said he was unable to locate any subliminal messages on it. He focused instead on the studio version. According to the attorney, under the superficially innocuous words, "Ah, people, you really know where it's at/You gotta bodge, get the flaps out," lurked the sinister command, "Why try, why try, get the gun and try it." As with the McCollum case, the lawsuit went nowhere.

Speaking against his attorney's advice when the McCollum allegations were first made, Ozzy defended "Suicide Solution." He said McCollum's father had misread "I tell you to enjoy life" as "I tell you to end your life." Osbourne claimed that he had written the song as a reaction to the death of a rocker friend who had overdosed. The song was intended, he said, to illustrate that suicide was *no* solution, and that to interpret the tune any other way would be ridiculous. Oh, and biting off the heads of live bats isn't?



Two unfortunate soldiers in Ozzy Osbourne's Satanic Army: Michael Waller (left); Harold Matthew Hamilton (right).

#71

John Parks
NORMAN BATES,
WE HARDLY KNEW YE

Houston resident John Parks loved his mother very much, so much that he was probably a little overprotective. Sharing a matchbox-sized apartment with his eighty-nine-year-old gene-trix, he tended to her every need. If he saw that she was sitting on her rocking chair, he placed a cozy blanket on her lap. Well aware of her delicate condition and worried that visitors might disturb her, he began denying friends and relatives access to their apartment. If neighbors in the building had a question, he pinned the answer to their doors.

When repairman Ernest Vasquez came to their apartment to fix a leak in the spring of 1985, he noticed that curtains were hung over the dining-room entrance to the living room, and he could hear the faint sound of a television humming from behind them. Parks told Vasquez that his mother was sitting in her rocking chair watching the tube and shouldn't be bothered. When Vasquez came back for another repair a few months later, Parks's mother was still behind the curtains, watching TV. Returning in the spring of '86 to plug yet another leak, Vasquez casually asked Parks how his mother was feeling.

"Fine," Parks curtly responded. Vasquez then asked how old she was. "Now you're getting personal," Parks snapped. "Let's cut it off right now." The men shared no further words.

In October, 1986, suspicious relatives started to demand that Parks permit them to visit his mother. He refused. His relatives sent a social worker to investigate, but Parks wouldn't allow her inside the apartment. The social worker returned a week later with police and a search warrant. When no one answered, they kicked open the door. John Parks was dead in the bedroom, a .38-caliber pistol in his hand and a chunk of lead in his head. His mother was still in the living room on the rocking chair. Police said she was "mummified" as a result of having been dead "anywhere from six months to two years."

#72

Peregrinus
THE HUMAN OLYMPIC TORCH

As with the Oscars, the Olympics are only worthwhile when people are taken hostage or the winners make some embarrassing political gesture. Only the participants' families care about the luge or the three-thousand-meter steeplechase, while the rest of us snore through another trio of tearful medal recipients standing stiffly through another dreadful national anthem. But if a dozen Zimbabwean nationalists with ski masks and Uzis suddenly parachute onto the field, let the games begin!

Peregrinus, a philosopher whose name sounds like a painful genital rash, was a spirited

mouthpiece for the doctrine of Cynicism, something all the Greco-Roman kids used to be crazy about. He found pleasure unpleasant and bragged that he wasn't afraid of dying. But unsure whether the other Cynics liked him, he designed the ultimate PR stunt for his school of thought. To prove that death held no sting for him, he proclaimed that he'd walk butt-naked into flames during the Olympic games of 165 A.D. A mite pallid as the moment of truth arrived, Peregrinus delivered a mostly inaudible speech about bringing "a golden life to a golden close." The moon was rising as he cast off his robes and walked up to the flames. He threw some incense into the inferno and then stepped right in, going pffft! within moments. A silly legend told how a phoenix flew up from the pyre. A bunch of oily Greek men then stopped having anal sex long enough to throw some rocks around, or whatever it is that they do at the Olympics.

#73

Scott Phillips
DOES HE STILL GET AN 'A'?

Scott had a lot of friends at his old school. They liked him there. Scott didn't have a lot of friends at his new school. They didn't like him there. The eleven-year-old transfer student at the Chester Community Grade School in Illinois felt all balled-up like a piece of scrap paper someone had chucked into a flaking metal wastebasket. He felt pissed on like an antiseptic cake in one of the boys' lavatory urinals. He didn't feel loved, wanted, and cuddled like a new boy should.

So when he was given a weekend assignment to write an essay in March, 1986, he called it "Suicide Mistake." He diligently wrote, edited, and rewrote it. He organized it into four sections. The first, "Introduction," acquainted the reader with a boy named Dan, a boy whose story, it was explained, was based on the true-life saga of another boy named Scott Phillips. A second section, "The New Boy," dealt with Dan's move to Chester, Illinois, after leaving a school where everyone liked him. Section Three, "Making Friends," told of Dan's frustration at his inability to find lasting, supportive playmates. The

final section was called "Committing Suicide" and related how Dan used a plastic bag to asphyxiate himself.

Scott handed in "Suicide Mistake" on Monday, March 20. As his teacher read it that night, she became alarmed and telephoned the principal. Together they decided that Scott was a prime candidate for therapy. As they spoke, paramedics hovered over Scott's body. They were unable to save him. Like "Dan," Scott used a plastic bag to asphyxiate himself.

HONORABLE MENTION

In 1980, Andrew Irvine of Birmingham, England, fired a .22-caliber pistol into his mouth while standing in a lane at a local gun club. Two years prior to this, Andrew had the misfortune of finding the body of his older brother, also a suicide. Andrew's father subsequently damned a British school system which had given his son "macabre" homework such as assignments to write his own epitaph and an essay based on the theme "A Shot in the Dark."

#74

Sylvia Plath
PATRON SAINT OF
SULLEN SORORITY SISTERS

With her plain face and irritating habit of using



Scott Phillips, author of "Suicide Mistake."

high-SAT words such as 'frangible,' this death poetess is a demigod to innumerable depressed female English majors. Every wan, bespectacled, frilly-sock-wearing, ballerina-slippers-owning, snot-nosed *jeune fille* who teases dopey boys by speaking in French owes a debt to the girl whom her family called "Sivvy."

But what set Sylvia Plath apart from most verbally gifted white Anglo-Saxonettes was her lifelong clinical depression. Instead of turning out dry sonnets in impeccable calligraphy, it was as if she shattered the page with an ice pick. Her words stung like an alcohol-soaked cotton ball on a bleeding zit. She was a girl who at age fourteen would write the world-weary "I Thought That I Could not be Hurt," who at seventeen described ocean waves breaking "like green glass." Flooded with new sensations upon entering college, she likened her head to a watermelon that had been smashed open.

Having spent most of her youth as somewhat of a prodigy, her feelings were numbed in 1953 after she was refused admission to Frank O'Connor's short-story-writing class. During a summer of electroshock treatments, Sylvia attempted to end her life for the first time. She broke into a steel cabinet at home, swallowed a handful of pills, and left a note which read, "Have gone for a long walk. Will be home tomorrow." She was found whimpering behind a pile of firewood in the house's cellar three days later. She fictionalized the incident in her novel *The Bell Jar*, comparing her emotional state at the time to "being stuffed further and further into a black, airless sock with no way out."

Sylvia recovered somewhat and married poet Ted Hughes, moving to England and living for the most part in the shadow of Ted's reputation. She squeezed out two of his kids from between her legs, attempted suicide again in the guise of a car accident, and got divorced. In December, 1962, she moved into the former London house of William Butler Yeats. At age thirty, her literary powers had never been sharper. "I am in heaven," she wrote to her mother in a letter dated December 12, 1962. "Life is such fun."

But it was to be the worst winter England had endured in over a hundred years. Biting cold

and chronic influenza knocked any temporary vitality straight out of her. "I am feeling a bit grim," read a letter to her mom written only six weeks after the above missive. "I am seeing the finality of it all..." A few days later, she wrote a poem called "Edge," a clear foreshadowing of her own death:

*The woman is perfected
Her dead*

*Body wears the smile of
accomplishment,
The illusion of a Greek
necessity*

*Flows in the scrolls of
her toga,
Her bare*

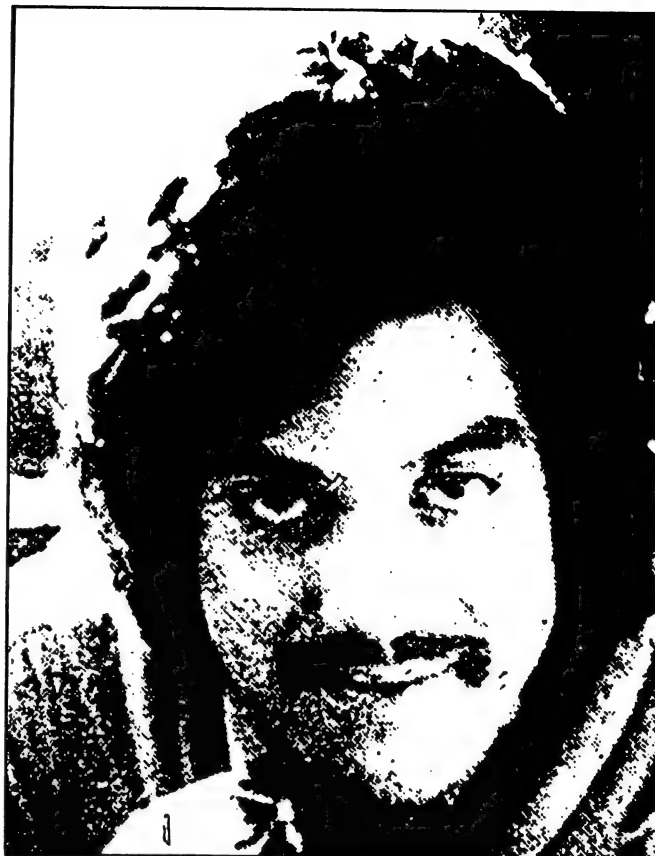
*Feet seem to be saying:
We have come so far, it
is over...*

Within a week, it was. On the frigid morning of February 11, 1963, after leaving out bread, butter, and milk for her kids, she sealed off the kitchen and placed her head in an oven. Several noxious lungfuls later, she quietly Plathed away.



For a few moments in the mid-seventies, Freddie Prinze held the double-edged honor of being America's favorite Hispanic. Playing opposite "the Man" in the hit sitcom *Chico and the Man*, he was an open-shirted, bell-bottom-wearing, hip young Chicano buck whose wisecracks tormented crabby auto-shop owner Jack Albertson: "Eez not my *chob*, man!" Prinze did for Hispanics what Jimmie "J.J." Walker did (or didn't do) for blacks: reinforce the worst stereotypes while trying to erase them. Like J.J., he spouted a stock punch line which made its way onto T-shirts and into singles' bars. Whereas Walker's line was "Dy-no-mitel," Prinze's was "Looooking goooood!"

But Freddie's life was the old *pez*-out-of-*agua* story: Manhattan street punk shoots on a wadlike trajectory to fame but ends up feeling lost and lonesome. At age twenty-two, he was guest-hosting for Johnny Carson and had been invited by Jimmy Carter to strut his overwrought ethnic caricature onstage at Carter's Pre-inaugural gala. He had even reached the pinnacle of show-biz success—a personal



Prinze: Even Tony Orlando was unable to help him.

friendship with singer Tony Orlando—but it still wasn't enough. "Is this what it's all about?" he once asked *Chico* producer James Komack. "Even my friendships are related to ratings." When Komack told him to relax and enjoy his success, Freddie replied, "No, that's not happiness for me anymore."

During the last year of his life, Freddie's friends saw the chili-flavored comic grow increasingly morose. He watched a copy of Zapruder's Kennedy-assassination film again and again. He became dependent on prescription 'ludes. A fifteen-month marriage to a Wyoming travel agent collapsed. While his amigos stared with impotent horror, Freddie would wave his .32-caliber pistol around and threaten to end it all.

"I'm gonna kill myself," he lamented to supporting player Scatman Crothers one afternoon during a rehearsal on the *Chico* soundstage. That night, Freddie drove to his apartment at the Beverly Comstock and played backgammon with some friends, who vainly tried to lift his spirits. After they had left, at around three a.m. on January 28, 1977, he phoned his manager and told him to cancel an appointment for the next day. "What's the use of having any more meetings?" Prinze allegedly mumbled. Disquieted by the call, his manager sped over to Freddie's pad, arriving to find him engaged in a telephone conversation with his estranged wife. Slamming down the receiver, Prinze reached beneath some sofa pillows and withdrew the .32, firing a bullet straight through his *cabeza*. He died from massive head wounds the next day at the UCLA Medical Center. That



Plath: another sensitive broad.

night, NBC canceled the airing of a *Chico* episode they deemed as "tasteless" in light of what had transpired. The show had reportedly mentioned "living zombies," brain damage, and death.

SUICIDE NOTE:

I can't take any more. It's all my fault.
There is no one to blame but me.

HONORABLE MENTION

According to the book *The Enigma of Suicide*, a thirteen-year-old Los Angeles girl shot herself soon after Prince's death. She left behind an eight-page letter which willed her toys and clothes to various people, gave instructions on how to care for her pets, and contained the entreaty, "Please let me be buried by Freddie."

#76

George Reeves

SLOWER THAN A SPEEDING BULLET

For most of the fifties, George Reeves played TV's Superman, the granite-jawed defender of the international monetary system. He darted through the clouds, ensuring that America



Reeves: pencil-sharpening annular muscle.

would shit on the rest of the world for generations to come. He ignored the pulchritudinous Lois Lane and served as a brutish top man to a willing, pliant Jimmy Olsen. Displaying the dramatic range of an Adam West, he had a stiff-shouldered presence which leads one to believe you could have sharpened a pencil in his sphincter.

In his real-life Clark Kent mode, Reeves was born George Bessolo to a smothering mommy who kept an "eternal flame" burning in front of George's picture. It wasn't until he was nearly thirty when he discovered that mom had lied about his birth date and that the man he had called dad was actually a stepfather. Nor had mommy told him that his stepfather killed himself a few years after she divorced him.

He successfully weaned himself away from his mother, but he couldn't escape being typecast as Superman. For two years after the show was canceled, his career was relegated to public appearances where he minced about in form-fitting tights and a cape.

To boost interest in his sagging fame, the one-time boxer set up an exhibition match with light-heavyweight champion Archie Moore, to take place in the summer of 1959. On the night of Tuesday, June 15, he hosted a small cocktail party for his fiancée Lenore Lemmon and writer Robert Condon, who had been assigned a magazine article about Reeves's impending slugfest with Moore. From all accounts, everyone got thoroughly stewed and drifted into the Land of Nod around midnight. An hour or so later, two of Reeves's friends pounded on the front door. Miss Lemmon awoke and let them in. Reeves got out of bed, threw on a robe, and stormed downstairs. He chastised the intruders for dropping in so late and bellowed that he was "in no mood for a party." After one of the guests apologized, Reeves raged back up to his bedroom.

"He's going upstairs to shoot himself," said a blasé Lenore Lemmon, who was scheduled to marry Reeves in Tijuana that coming Friday. The party-goers then heard rustling noises coming from the floor above. "See, he's opening the drawer to get a gun," Lemmon said. KA-BLAMI! "See there, I told you," she said, "he shot himself." Reeves was found naked on his bed, the blast from a 9mm Luger proving more harmful than a megadose of kryptonite.

HONORABLE MENTION

Real-estate dealer George W. Reeves, no relation to the actor, foreclosed his own mortgage with four shots from a revolver in Tarrytown, New York, on August 24, 1914.

#77

Rufus Ripley

EXCEDRIN HEADACHE NUMERO UNO

POUND, POUND, POUND. The pain inside Rufus Ripley's head made him see stars. It was as

if a flock of woodpeckers had flown into his ear and started hammering away. He was a good worker and a sincere Christian, but the relentless throbbing often made him unable to attend church or go to his job. Doctors were at a loss to uncover the root of his affliction. For as long as he could, Rufus ground his teeth and endured the intra-cranial Chinese water torture.

Finally, one day around New Year's, 1872, he couldn't stand it anymore. He walked into the Bank of New York and shot himself in the head, blotting out the pain better than any aspirin could. An autopsy revealed that numerous quarter-inch, needle-sharp bones had formed on his skull's interior. As they grew, they punctured Ripley's cerebrum and dug into it, causing the stabbing pain from which he sought his final refuge. The poor bastard had gone through much of life with his brain impaled on a bed of nails.

HONORABLE MENTION

Troubled by "terrific headaches," Jud W. Clark of Culver City, California, sent a .32-caliber analgesic through his brain on October 21, 1921.

HONORABLE MENTION

Louis Larocque of Port Jefferson, New York, said to be maddened by headaches and pain in his left ear, commanded his chauffeur to drive him to a local pier at around three-thirty a.m. on August 6, 1913. While the chauffeur waited, Larocque took a long walk off the short pier.

HONORABLE MENTION

Nashville resident Irene McDowell, forty-five, set herself ablaze on New Year's Day, 1966, explaining in a note that she couldn't bear the pain of a chronic toothache.

#78

Edgar Rosenberg

**CAN WE TALK?
NAH, I'D RATHER KILL MYSELF**

There's no business like schmoe business. At age sixty-two, Edgar Rosenberg felt as if he had been kicked in the *schmeckel* by a callous entertainment industry. As he saw it, they had chewed him up and spit him out like a day-old potato knish. What was he—chopped liver?

SUICIDE

Edgar was a man who had chosen to live behind the scenes, a sour little nebbish who managed the career of his wife, plastic-surgery robot Joan Rivers. He was an anomaly in Hollywood, someone who preferred reading books to smoking crack. "Edgar loved to have us all sitting in the kitchen, eating leftover caviar and crackers and talking about literature and our lives," recalled his close friend Vincent Price. "He loved Fabergé eggs all covered with diamonds but also loved perfectly cooked rice pudding. That was the dichotomy of his character." What a dirty old goat!

He married Joan only four days after meeting her in July, 1965, and promoted her from nightclub nobody to America's Biggest Chick Comic. But Edgar's go-go temperament eventually caught up with him. While arguing with Joan in 1984 about their daughter Melissa's college plans, he had a jumbo heart attack which sent him into a two-week coma. "I caused Edgar's heart attack," Joan would later joke in her saucy stand-up routine. "We were making love, and I took the bag off my head!" Edgar eventually emerged from the coma but later fell victim to a hernia, gout, a bleeding ulcer, and a cancerous growth in his mouth caused by his nervous habit of chewing at the insides of his cheeks.

But the death blow came after what should have been the highlight of both his and Joan's careers. In 1986, the embryonic Fox network signed Joan to do *The Late Show*, a nocturnal hour of celebrity palaver. But almost from the get-go, network executives seemed to view Edgar as a meddler, a busybody, a pushy male yenta. In March, 1987, he was unceremoniously booted in the *tuchis* and banished from the set. Two months later, Joan was axed. Industry pundits blamed Edgar. Even Edgar blamed Edgar.



On Wednesday, August 14, while on business in Philadelphia, he phoned Joan from his hotel room and told her he was going to kill himself. "Don't do it 'til Friday," she fired back, "because Thursday I'm having liposuction." Edgar reportedly chuckled at Joan's barb.

A few hours later, he sat down and recorded three cassette tapes: one for Joan, one for Melissa, and one for business associate Thomas Pileggi. He arranged his business papers, placed Joan and Melissa's tapes in separate envelopes he had marked with the three-kiss shorthand of "XXX," packed his suitcases, and swallowed a fatal dose of Valium. He then ambled over to his room's mini-bar and belted down the contents of a few of those pocket-sized liquor bottles often found on airplanes.

Joan claimed to have been immobilized by Edgar's death, but a few insensitive tabloids commented that she seemed to be handling the news quite well, almost *too* well. She tearfully denied their allegations. The gravel-throated funny lady has bounced back, probably because most of her body is made of rubbery space-age polymers.

SUICIDE NOTE:

(Excerpts from the transcription of the tape Edgar made for Joan):

I cannot bear to be a fifth wheel. I know this is not your fault. I had the heart attack, and I'm a changed person. But believe me, when I fought, I fought for you.... If somebody had not been the bastard, you might have been cut up like a salami.... It's very hard for me to show emotion, but you made those twenty-two years a heaven for me. I miss you desperately, and I love you.

#79

Gregg Sanders

ONE DEMERIT OVER THE LINE

He was a good student, but not a great one. His grades were above average, but they weren't exceptional. The tragedy, as Gregg's parents constantly reminded him, is that he was capable of doing better. His performance was *OK*, but great men never settle for *OK*. He seemed happy just to get by. Poor Gregg, always settling for second-best. He should have applied himself more. He should have pushed a little harder. He should have cracked open a few more books. He should have burned a little more of the midnight oil. He should have been more like his older sister, the class valedictorian. Now *there* was a student.

Maybe it was too much pressure for a fifteen-year-old Jersey kid to handle. Still, Gregg couldn't let his parents down. He had to set higher goals. He had to model himself after someone who groped for perfection with unblinking discipline. He had to imitate... Adolf Hitler. When Gregg was feeling all alone, he'd crawl through a cramped passageway leading from his bedroom into the attic. That's where he kept his armbands, his swastikas, his collection of quotations from the fearsome dictator. That's where, if only fleetingly, he tasted excellence.

Outside that tiny attic, Gregg felt horribly flawed. He seemed destined to fail. When a



history teacher at his exclusive prep school threatened to give him a demerit for talking in class on January 10, 1975, Gregg knew that his parents would be notified by mail. He didn't think they'd be able to handle another disappointment. He confided to a friend that he had three choices: "I can beat up the teacher, I can intercept the letter, or I can kill myself." Since the teacher was a former boxer, Gregg ruled out that option. His parents sometimes arrived home before he did, so intercepting the letter might be difficult. That left only one choice.

On the evening of January 14, while Gregg's father was busy in the kitchen going over some bank reports, Gregg crept up from behind and whacked him repeatedly in the head with a two-foot axe. He then charged into the dining room and hacked his mother to pieces. Bolting from the house, Gregg sprinted a half-mile through fifteen-degree weather to a local water tower. He scaled its one-hundred-and-fifty-foot spiral staircase, from atop which one could see Manhattan's lights. Gregg probably killed himself in the manner he once told a friend he would: He climbed over the eight-foot security fence which rimmed the tower's top. Then, hanging by one hand from the ledge, he used his free hand to slash the wrist which still held on, causing him to fall to his death in the quiet white snow. Gregg knew that he had to do what he

did. If his parents had found out about that demerit, it would have killed them, anyway.

SUICIDE NOTE:

(Left under a paperweight on his bedroom desk):

To whom it may concern:

I am sorry for the trouble I have caused. I'm not in any way mad at my parents. I just can't take it anymore. Well, I just wanted to say I'm sorry.

Good Luck,
Gregg Sanders.

#80

Sappho

QUEEN OF ALL VULVAS

This lute-strumming lyricist's all-girl pajama parties were so steamy, an entire sexual orientation was named after the island on which they took place. Born around 612 B.C., Sappho will forever be known as the top lesbo of Lesbos. Deeming her poetry "a threat to public morals," the Greek church would later burn all but five percent of her writings, but what remains paints a portrait of one hot little minx. She wrote unashamedly of "the sweet apple which reddens upon the topmost bough... [the] golden chickpea growing on the seashore... the wild hyacinth which on the mountainside the shepherd treads underfoot, yet it still blooms purple on the ground." Sounds like PUSSY to me. But what could have possibly been



Sappho: partial to seafood.

contained in the ninety-five percent that was destroyed? Lurid descriptions of violet-scented maidens eating stuffed grape leaves out of each other's assholes? Cluster-fucks using painted vases as dildos? The infamous Athenian Olive-Oil Massage? Many accounts describe Sappho as a dwarfish hag in dire need of electrolysis, so she must have had a tongue that could wash a school bus in three minutes.

SUICIDE

But her diet didn't consist exclusively of raw clams. In fact, she married early in life and gave birth to a daughter named Kleis. As Sappho reached her fifties, with her ladies-only poetry classes disbanded and her sweet juices swiftly drying into crust, she once again felt the lure of the naked mole rat. She fell like a schoolgirl for a sailor named Phaon, a bronze-skinned, cock-slinging, gyro-belching Grecian stud. Phaon gave her a few token fucks but left the island without saying goodbye. Perhaps he had left on business, perhaps in exodus from Sappho's overweening passion. Sappho was incredulous at the word of his departure. Her dark-green skin blanched. Since Phaon's boat was said to be headed for Sicily, she tortured herself with thoughts that he was balling all the Italian chicks. She tossed and turned. Finally, she boarded a ship bound for Corinth, hoping to connect with a boat for Sicily. When her ship stopped at the island of Leucas, Sappho disembarked. She walked to a grassy mesa above the white-stone cliffs. Probably realizing that it was futile to chase after a younger man, she broke into a gallop and threw herself down into the Mediterranean. Her body washed ashore and was supposedly cremated and shipped back to the Lesbian city of Mitylene. Hadn't you learned, O daughter of the moon, that a penis bites like a cobra? If you had forsworn men entirely and stuck to hot tuna, you'd have died with a smile on your face and some young nymph licking your bush.

#81

William Sexton

WAKE ME UP WHEN IT'S OVER

Everyone has opened their eyes from a nightmare only to sigh gratefully when they peer around the room and realize that their life is duller than their subconscious fantasies. But since dreams can affect the body as powerfully as wide-awake stimuli, they can't be dismissed as totally unreal. Sexual material beamed onto a sleeping male adolescent's brain pan can trigger actual orgasm. Although it's impossible to prove, it's a common belief that a person will die from shock if they fall out of bed while dreaming that they're falling. Then there's that creepy twilight area, not really asleep and not really awake, where the id's unclean spirits merge with the physical ability to do damage.

A knock on the bedroom door awoke William

Sexton's sister late one night in June of 1844. The Bedfordshire, England, woman walked to the door and opened it, finding William's dark silhouette standing there quietly. He said not a word, instead pointing to his throat. His sister pressed her fingers to it, recoiling at the warm, moist feeling of blood. She called for a doctor, who bandaged William's wound. Still unable to speak, William wrote down on paper what had happened. He had been dreaming that a policeman was threatening to place him in the stocks. In his dream, Sexton told the officer that he'd rather slice his own throat than suffer such humiliation. When the cop lunged toward Sexton to apprehend him, Sexton, in an apparent sleepwalking state, grabbed his penknife and slit his own jugular vein. He later died as a result of blood loss.

HONORABLE MENTION

Charles Moseley, a clerk at the Bank of England, had a recurring dream that the police were after him for forgery. Moseley apparently was an honest worker who had no reason to be paranoid, but he couldn't escape the dream. At around four o'clock one morning in November, 1855, after having his sleep disrupted several times from the same dream, he awoke running from his bed. His wife chased after him. Moseley reached the kitchen, pulled out a butcher knife, and cut open his belly so deeply that a section of his intestines popped out. In the throes of mania, he sliced off a chunk of intestine and would have kept going, but a policeman arrived and restrained him. Moseley died three hours later.

HONORABLE MENTION

Sleeping on a bus as it cruised through Virginia late in 1931, Arthur Fournier was apparently dreaming that he was on a ship, because he suddenly sprung up, screamed, "She's sinking! Jump for your lives!" and dove out a window to his death.

#82

Del Shannon

I WAH-WAH-WAH-WAH-WANT
TO DIE

Rock critics don't usually care for the very early sixties, but rock critics are dicks. That's why no one respects them except other rock critics. The pop music which spanned Kennedy's administration had lost rockabilly's rhythm and hadn't yet discovered the power chord, leaving only greasy, trebly tales of betrayal. High-pitched losers such as Gene Pitney and Lou Christie waxed echoey testaments to pimplly love which were weirder than Pink Floyd could ever hope to be. One of the best examples of such maudlin operettas was Del Shannon's 1961 smash



Del Shannon: goat killer?

"Runaway." Over a frantic calypso beat and hypercaffeinated organ solo, Del's gerbilish vocals hit those high notes like someone was clamping down on his sack with a set of ice tongs. Jerky Del wandered around in a rainstorm, bawling his eyes out, wondering why "she" ran away.

Because you're an UGLY cocksucker, Del. Your face scared her off. I mean, put a couple bolts in your neck, and who needs Boris Karloff? You look like something that lives under bridges and kills goats.

And Del sang as if he knew it. On subsequent tunes such as "Hats off to Larry" and "Little Town Flirt," he proved a master of homely-guy pathos, his crumbly squeak of a voice expressing a near-comic level of emotional pain. It was easy to picture him as Charles Weedon Westover, the lonely Michigan carpet-store clerk who got one lucky break. He was the sort

of kid who received wedgies in the high-school locker room and ate his lunch all alone.

As the sixties grew shaggier, Del's slippery sound stopped selling records. He found himself all alone again, doing battle with the hackneyed "personal demons." He staggered around in a dark home studio he called "the mole hole," washing down pills with whiskey chasers. "When I was twenty I was drinking," he told a reporter, "and when I was thirty I was drinking more, and at forty way too much." At fifty-five, he had failed in several comeback attempts and was forced to butter his bread as a living mannequin on the oldies circuit. On February 9, 1990, he took a .22-caliber rifle and made that face even uglier. His wife blamed his suicide on a temporary manic phase induced by the antidepressant drug Prozac. But maybe Del had simply taken a long, sobering look in the mirror.

#83

Stephan Simon

SHOW ME A DITCH,
AND I'LL DIVE IN IT

Stephan Simon had two problems: First, he was a gravedigger, and second, no one would fuck him because of it. The maidens of Gross-Becakerek, Czechoslovakia, didn't want a man coming home from work all muddy, smelling like embalming fluid and worms. They couldn't stomach having a husband toiling all day among corpses and then coming home to jump their bones. They would not lie fallow and permit him to sink his tombstone into them. They refused to be another burial plot for him to plow. In his years as the local sexton, he had buried many of his best friends. That, combined with the fact that his vocation made him a social leper, probably lent him more affinity for the dead than the living. So one day under the cruel grey autumn sky of 1933, he decided that he should join his friends six feet under. Using his shovel for the last time, he dug a fresh grave. He then descended into the moist soil and killed himself. The newspapers don't specify which method he used, but at least he spared his townsmen the annoyance of buying a casket.

HONORABLE MENTION

In 1970, Jean Devlin of Newbury, England, dug her own burial pit, took an overdose of drugs, and jumped in. After she expired, her sister Pauline covered her with dirt.

#84

Mitch Snyder

HOMELESS AND LIFELESS

As a self-appointed savior to the homeless, Mitch Snyder's contempt for an unfeeling society radiated like the rotting-cabbage smell which rolled off his torso. With boogers hanging out of his nose, he denounced America as "one of the most heinous cultures the world has ever seen." To make Americans feel guilty for this, he marched through Washington, D.C.'s streets carrying a coffin and throwing blood on a federal building's walls. Twisting the government's arm to pay attention to him and his shelter-deprived brethren, he staged high-profile hunger strikes, some lasting several weeks. Even when he didn't have to, he slept outside on steam grates, picked through dumpsters, and frightened people who worked for a living. Martin Sheen, who portrayed Mitch in a 1986 TV-movie called *Samaritan: The Mitch Snyder Story*, called him a "saint." When asked to defend his actions, Mitch would respond with a self-effacing shrug and a simple "God told me to." Posing for pictures, he would choose dramatic lighting and stare off-camera with sanctimonious disdain for a world which owed him a living.

In effect, he was demanding that society do for him everything that he failed to do for his own wife and kids. Because while Mitch Snyder was a champion of the homeless, he was a chump to his own family. Although he had no physical handicaps, Mitch couldn't manage his own dick or hold down a job. Born in Brooklyn, Mitch was only nine when his father abandoned his family. "I grew up swearing never, ever to do to my kids what my father had done to me," he would later say. As he pubesced, he dropped out of high school and earned spare cash by busting into parking meters. He apparently spent the money on himself, because when he and his girlfriend went to the movies, she usually

had to pay. She married him anyway and popped out two of his rug rats. To feed the family, Mitch graduated from parking meters to check forgery. In 1969, six years after he was married, he did what he had sworn never, ever to do: He split town with a check-forging buddy and left the family hanging. A year later, he was nabbed in Vegas for auto theft and got sent up for a three-year stretch.

His long-suffering wife still visited him every two weeks, only to find that Mitch had transformed from Johnny Palooka to St. Francis of Assisi. Having fallen under the spell of fellow cons Daniel and Philip Berrigan, the famous radical Catholic priests, Mitch started fasting to

protest America's use of "tiger cages" in Vietnam. Mitch said he got a "sense of power" from his hunger strike. When he got out of prison, he told the wife and kids to go fuck themselves—there were people who *needed* him, and his family didn't seem to appreciate that. His wife saw nothing of Mitch until twelve years later, when she chanced upon a *60 Minutes* episode profiling the selfless Samaritan.

Curiously, when Mitch Snyder fastened an electrical cord around his neck and hanged himself in July, 1990, his suicide note made no mention of the starving millions whose cross he had borne since the mid-seventies. Instead, it reportedly bitched about the fact that Carol Fennelly, a woman who helped Mitch ladle creamed corn to street bums for years, didn't love him as much as he loved her. Snyder's body was found swinging in his private bedroom in a twelve-hundred-bed shelter. He had virtually blackmailed Ronald Reagan into donating the shelter during a highly publicized fifty-one-day fast. Down amid the twelve hundred beds, God's little lambs smoked crack, sold their bodies for heroin, and knocked each other unconscious for pocket change.



Mitch Snyder: aromatic homeless activist.

#85 *Stockbrokers During the Great Depression* BULLISH ON SUICIDE

The image of Wall Street brokers swan-diving off skyscraper ledges in October, 1929, is a marvelous American spectacle, right up there with the Hindenburg's crash or the Kent State massacre. Jealous pricks that we are, we enjoy it when the rich are brought down to earth, whether figuratively or—SMACK!—literally.

The "Black Thursday" (October 24) and "Black Tuesday" (October 29) stock-market crashes represented a young nation's first nervous breakdown. As the ticker tape began spewing death notices, speculators ran into the streets with the aimless frenzy of ants who had been feeding on a dead mouse, only to have it taken away from them. Rope-twirling hayseed Will Rogers happened to be in the Wall Street area on Black Thursday, which he called "Wailing Day." He also fueled the myth of free-falling financiers: "When Wall Street took that tailspin, you had to stand in line to get a window to jump out of, and speculators were selling space for bodies in the East River."

Would that it were so, but only two Wall Street nose-dives have been positively linked to the crash, and one was that of a lowly fifty-one-year-old clerical worker named Hulda Borowski. However, New York newspapers in the days directly following Black Thursday report an unusually high number of "accidental" falls. Alleged to be violently ill from some clam chowder he had eaten for lunch, thirty-four-year-old lawyer Chester Solez "lost his balance" when he stuck his head out for some fresh air on October 25. On the same day, another lawyer named Bernard Queller fell eleven stories "as he jumped to unwind the cord



October 29, 1929: a bevy of batty brokers.

of a window shade." On October 27, octogenarian Esther Mack "either jumped or fell" from her Upper West Side apartment, smearing the sidewalk with old-lady guts.

Fortunately, several of the financially ruined found other methods to end their lives. Having lost over a million in the crash, the president of the Rochester Gas and Electric Corporation inhaled a fatal amount of his own company's gas. With his small fortune whittled down to four cents, Wellington Lytle blew out his brains on December 7 in his Milwaukee hotel room. His suicide note willed that "my body should go to science, my soul to Andrew W. Mellon, and sympathy to my creditors." Stock-related suicides were recorded as far away as Chile, Cuba, and all over Europe. In America, the trend grew as the Depression deepened. By 1934, insurance companies were inundated with suicide claims, with one firm moaning that "in nearly every instance, the motive has been 'wiped out in the stock market.'"

Dead stockbrokers. Serves them right for fucking up the country with their rodentlike greed. If they hadn't jumped, somebody should have pushed them.



On October 26, 1987, a week after the market lost five hundred and eight points in a single day, Miami stock speculator Arthur Kane walked into his local Merrill Lynch office with a .357 Magnum and shot two brokers before taking his own life.



It was a crime which scared the khaki slacks off white America: A young Boston couple, their skin as light as vanilla yogurt, were returning from a Lamaze class on the dark side of town when a black thug forced his way into their car.

He made them drive to an industrial area, where he stole their watches, jewelry, and cash. The assailant panicked when he noticed a cellular phone, accusing the couple of being police. "I think you're Five-O," he said, then blasted them with a .38 snubby and ran away.

"My wife's been shot; I've been shot," gasped Charles Stuart over his car phone to State Police that night in October, 1989. Dazed and bloody, Stuart pulled out a second set of keys and zipped around the dangerous neighborhood until he pulled over and lost consciousness.

"Stay with me, Chuck.... I need you, man," said a desperate police dispatcher. Cops finally found the couple and raced them to a hospital, where doctors prematurely plucked a four-pound baby from Carol Stuart's dying vagina. Six hours later, Carol croaked. Her scrawny infant was placed in an incubator, and its father was admitted to intensive care.

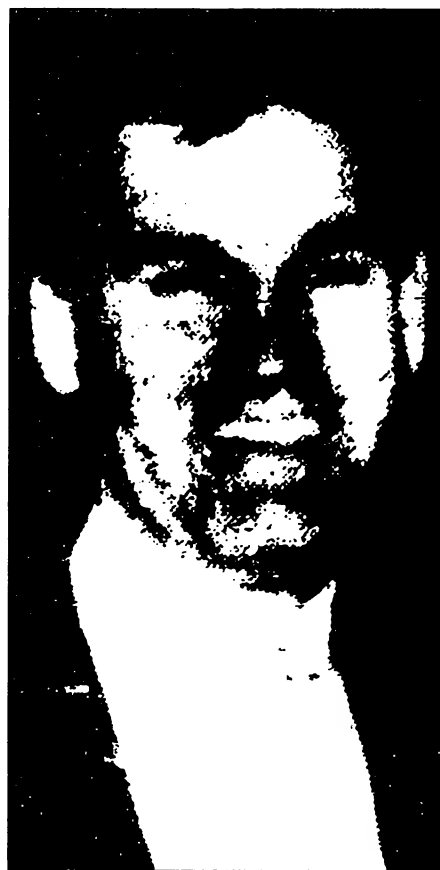
"Now you sleep away from me," wrote a gravely wounded Charles Stuart in a statement read aloud at Carol's funeral. "I will never again know the feeling of your hand in mine, but I will always feel you. I miss you and I love you." Regarding Carol's killer, he said, "In our souls we must forgive this sinner because [God] would, too." Seventeen days after the shooting, when newborn Christopher Stuart was a few hours from death, his distraught daddy requested to be wheeled up to the incubator so he could say goodbye.

Beantown crackers were appalled that the young couple, who typified the tight-assed aura of vintage yuppiedom, had fallen prey to yet another black psychopath. Indignant palefaces vowed on TV cameras to "nev-ah go in-tah Bah-ston ahf-tah dahk again." You could sense their fear of tribal drums and fires crackling under cannibal kettles. They castigated the anonymous flat-nosed hoodlum who had caused the death of the Stuarts' Howdy Doody baby. Within hours of the shooting, police were swarming all over Boston's Mission Hill district, interrogating every black male in sight. State legislators were calling for the institution of the death penalty. A group of Boston business leaders offered a fifteen-thousand-dollar reward for information leading to the killer's

arrest and conviction. In mid-November, a black drifter named William Bennett was apprehended and charged with the crime. Shortly before Christmas, a gallant Chuck Stuart checked out of the hospital and went to his parents' house for some much-deserved rest. Eighty-two thousand dollars from his wife's insurance policy helped ease the pain a bit, but it wouldn't bring Carol back.

The case seemed resolved until early January. Stuart's brother Matthew, after being assured he was immune from prosecution, dropped a bomb on the lap of Boston police: Charles Stuart shot his wife and then himself, concocting the black-guy story because he knew people would swallow it. Matthew had helped Charles plan Carol's murder, conducting a dry run the night before the shooting and driving by Chuck's car moments after the killing so Chuck could pass him the gun.

Charles Stuart somehow received word that his sibling had turned stoolie. On the morning of January 4, 1990, he drove his spanking-new Nissan Maxima—a car he had purchased with Carol's insurance money and trade-in credit from the vehicle in which he killed her—to Boston's Tobin Bridge, left the engine running, and leapt one hundred and forty-nine feet into the icy Mystic River. There were later rumors of an additional insurance policy and a leggy blonde chick who kept visiting Chuck while he was in the hospital.



Hey, Chuck, who was that lady I saw you killing last night?

"That was no lady—that was my wife!"

Police released murder suspect William Bennett, who claimed that his life had been destroyed. A sheepish Mayor Raymond Flynn apologized to Mission Hill's blacks. He paid a quick visit to the Bennett household, pissing the family off further because he didn't even stay long enough to sit down.

SUICIDE NOTE:

(Excerpts from a note found in his car):

I love my family....The last four months have been real hell....All the allegations have taken my strength.

#87

Harry Swart

IMPROPER USE OF THE
HANDICAPPED RAMP

Harry Swart didn't feel like playing bingo with amputees for the rest of his life. At forty-five, he had spent nine years as basically a house pet of the Chicago Home for Incurables. Paralyzed from the waist down, he was unable to stray more than a yard or two without unbearable pain. He tired of the smell of pine cleaner, the pitter-patter of slippers on linoleum, the all-night wailing of the infirm. It was beneath his dignity to endure the patronizing pats on the head from health-care workers, to be lowered into the bathtub by fat attendants, to have three people in white jackets wait outside the toilet stall while he took a dump. It was enough.

Using all the strength he could muster, Harry rolled out of the home in a wheelchair a few minutes after high noon on May 21, 1921. Slick with sweat, he spun the chair's wheels thirteen blocks to the Jackson Park pier on Lake Michigan. Then, with health attendants chasing at his numb heels, he wheeled himself straight into the water. Glub, glub, glub, no more pain.

#88

Jacques Vaché

DADA'S DADA IS DEAD-DEAD

Because he loved guns and hated people, Jacques Vaché can be forgiven for being French. Because his last "performance" gesture was to kill himself and two of his friends, we can overlook the fact that he was a flouncy boozwhah art boy.

A supposed influence on André Breton and subsequent froggy poop-slingers, Vaché's *schtique* was "attaching very little importance to anything." He adhered to a doctrine he called *umore*, meaning that the deeply perceptive are able to find comic value in life's uselessness. Breton met him in an infirmary in



Lotsa dead Frenchmen: Jacques Vaché's depiction of World War I's carnage.

1916 and was fascinated with how Vaché, recovering from a calf wound, could spend hours arranging and rearranging a few flowers and pictures on a lace-covered night table. Vaché spurned work after his leg mended, preferring to don soldier or aviator costumes and stroll the streets of Nantes refusing to acknowledge his friends. He is probably best known for taunting theater patrons with a loaded revolver.

"I object to being killed in the war," he wrote from the front before being wounded in WWI. "I shall die when I want to die, and then I shall die with somebody else. To die alone is boring. I should prefer to die with one of my best friends." In 1919, not long after the war ended, a twenty-three-year-old Vaché invited a pair of his closest friends over for tea. Without their knowledge, he slipped fatal doses of opium in their beverages and sprinkled a like amount in his own drink. It was a brilliant final act, one that more artists should imitate.

#89

Vincent Van Gogh

EAR'S TO YOU

Pauvre, pauvre Vincent. Teeny-weeny baby-waby got a big bad bruise on his heart. Those bad, bad, stinky people made you cry. You is a big blue pretty bird, and the bad people are jealous that they can't fly. They gang up and say naughty things about you. They killed you like the Romans killed Jesus.

BLOW ME, Vincent. Isn't it time we stopped making excuses for the "creative" among us? Van Gogh did some OK things with color, but he was a flat-out jerkoff to those around him. Sure, it's mildly tragic that he only sold one painting in his life, but maybe that was because his personality was as repellent as the sperm a Doberman leaves on your leg after humping it. Yet people insist on viewing Van Gogh as a

suicide

"holy fool." In a nauseating song tribute, Don "American Pie" McLean consoles the painter, assuring him that "this world was never meant for one as beautiful as you." Vincent's *dead*, Don. He can't *hear* you.

The ditzzy Dutchman was born in 1853, a grumpy, freckled little boy rarely known for smiling. Beleaguered with the appearance of a constipated Franciscan monk, the young Van Gogh trudged through the peaks and valleys of religious mania. He had his first mental collapse in his twenties when he was rejected by Eugénie Loyer, a woman whose face could stew asparagus. Never one for moderation, he turned from Christ to the clap, going through hookers as if his dick was a paintbrush. He contracted gonorrhea and later syphilis, his diseased tinkler at one point requiring catheterization. Foul moods and burgeoning alcoholism caused an ulcer to blossom in his knotted stomach.

By the time Paul Gauguin came to stay with him in 1888, Vincent was as pleasant as boiled vomit. Enraged at Gauguin's portrait of him, which Vincent felt made him look insane, he hurled a glass of the narcotic beverage absinthe at his painter friend. One evening, as Gauguin was taking his nightly constitutional, he turned around to find Van Gogh coming at him with a razor. Failing to inflict any damage on Gauguin, the gutless Dutch boy scampered away. At about eleven-thirty that evening, Van Gogh walked into a local whorehouse with a bloodied towel wrapped around his head and asked for a woman named Rachel. When she appeared, he handed her a package wrapped in newspaper, instructing her to "guard this object carefully." He then left. Rachel unwrapped the little love offering, only to find the lower portion of Vincent's left ear.

Returning home the next morning after what he thought was an appropriate cooling-off period, Gauguin discovered blood sloshed all over the house and Vinny lying near death. Van Gogh, catatonic from the trauma, was sent away to an asylum. Gauguin packed his bags and eventually moved to balmier climes.

Doctors at the asylum diagnosed Van Gogh as "suffering from acute mania with hallucinations of sight and hearing...[and] epileptic fits at very infrequent intervals." His memory shot, his brain as soft as a month-old banana, Vincent thrice attempted suicide at the hospital. Two of the attempts involved swallowing his own paint. "The thing is that my head is so bad," he wrote to his brother Theo, "without pain it is true, but altogether stupefied."

When he returned to his "Yellow House" after his release, he tried drinking turpentine but was restrained by a friend. By this time, the townsfolk of Arles had turned completely against him. Neighbors spread rumors that he fondled women. The kids threw things at him. A boy villager claimed to have espied Vincent

jerking off in the woods.

After eating lunch at an inn on July 27, 1890, the psycho expressionist hiked to a spot above Auvers, armed with his painting kit and a revolver he had been

using to shoo away meddlesome crows. He placed his easel against a haystack and shot himself in the chest, wobbling back to the inn and crawling up the stairs into bed. The innkeepers found him curled up in the fetal position. A small hole near his heart was surrounded by bold, swirling globs of red and purple. Doctors pronounced his condition as hopeless. Infection had set in by the next day, leaving the mad aesthete gurgling for each breath. His brother visited at around noon. While Theo cradled Vincent's head in his arms, the wounded *artiste* looked up and said, "I wish I could pass away like this." His wish came true a half-hour later. Since his death was ruled a suicide, the Catholic church refused to say mass for his soul, meaning that Van Gogh now roasts in hell.

SUICIDE NOTE:

(Supposedly written to his brother):

Well, my own work, I am risking my life for it, and my reason has half-foundered because of it—that's alright—but you are not among the dealers in men as far as I know, and you can still choose your side, I think, acting with humanity, but what do you want?

#90

Vatel

COULDN'T HE HAVE ORDERED
A DOMINO'S PIZZA?

As head chef for France's foo-foo Prince de Condé, *le grand Vatel* was moronically proud. When King Louis XV came to visit the prince for a three-day blowout in April of 1761, Vatel sweated over every subatomic detail. He neurotically prepared a venison feast on the first night of the king's visit, a meal over which Louie Louie slobbered with praise. Vatel couldn't relax, though, sleeping not a wink that evening. At around eight the next morning, as Vatel punctiliously readied for lunch, he flipped his powdered wig when he mistakenly thought that there wouldn't be enough fish to go around. Fatally ashamed that His Majesty would have no seafood, Vatel went to his bedroom and impaled himself on a sword. The fish arrived an hour later.

HONORABLE MENTION

Petrified with guilt over having smashed his employer's automobile, the chauffeur of Parisian businessman Georges Menier drowned himself in March, 1921.



Goghing, Goghing, Gone.

SUICIDE NOTE:

(*Monsieur's chauffeur*):

Monsieur: You entrusted your new car to me, and I have had the misfortune to damage it irreparably. I cannot survive such disaster.

#91

Popo Walker

PRE-PUBE COUP DE GRÂCE

Children, those little cocksuckers, can be so cruel. They'll tease and taunt and bully and berate you to the point of tears. And when you cry, they'll tease you more loudly. As soon as they find your weakness, they'll strike like wolves. They'll make fun of your face, your hair, the way you walk, the things you say. With little eight-year-old Popo Walker of Lakeland, Florida, it was his name. Poo-Poo. Pee-Pee. Popeye. When Popo told his aunt about it, she complained to North Lakeland Elementary School's principal. Realizing they'd better lay off his name, Popo's classmates came up with a new prank. Wouldn't it be funny if they blamed him for filching four bucks from the teacher's pocketbook? Popo didn't laugh. Neither did the teacher or the principal, who told Popo they believed that he was innocent. Popo wasn't impressed. He told his dad he wasn't going back to school. In November, 1984, he strapped a belt to his bunk bed and hanged himself because of four dollars, fifty cents for every year of his life.

HONORABLE MENTION

Eleven-year-old Ian Storey of Bramhall, England, hanged himself from his bunk bed with a judo belt in 1991 after his mom punished him by sending him to his room an hour earlier than usual.

HONORABLE MENTION

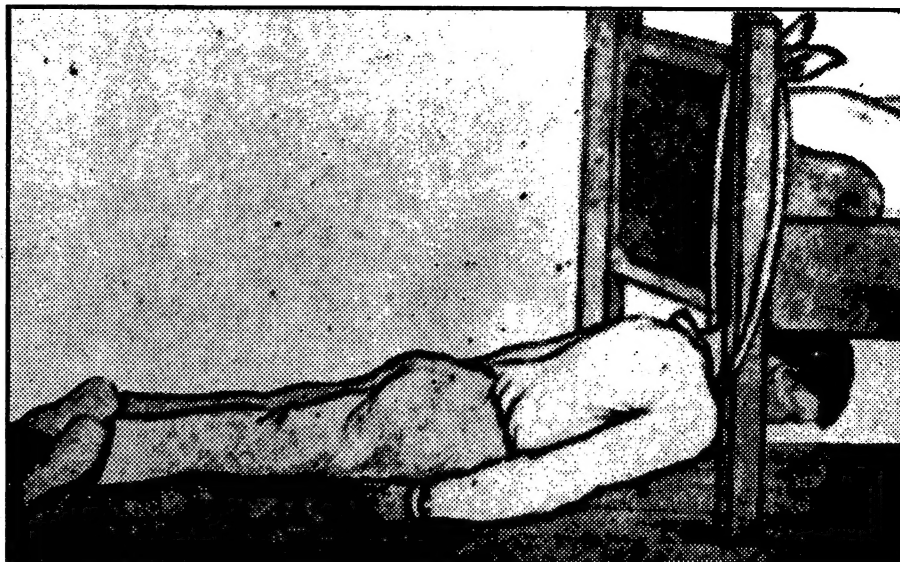
In April, 1858, ten-year-old Adam Commelin hanged himself with his neckerchief in a Scottish jail after receiving a forty-day sentence for stealing six Swedish turnips.

HONORABLE MENTION

Eight-year-old Girard Lyons of Buffalo, New York, hanged himself with his necktie on a pair of coat hooks in his school's cloakroom on March 20, 1930. The teacher had sent him to the cloakroom as punishment for his "unruly" behavior.

HONORABLE MENTION

Twelve-year-old "boy genius" Stephen John



Fairweather of South Wales hanged himself in the spring of 1975. He was reportedly disgusted with the fact that his mother didn't clean the house.

HONORABLE MENTION

Ten-year-old Rachel Greenberg of Great Neck, New York, hanged her Little Neck with a jump-rope in March, 1986. No reason was given.

HONORABLE MENTION

Eleven-year-old Paul Witte of Manhattan, afraid that his father would whip him for cutting class, swallowed a fatal dose of "Rough on Rats" on June 20, 1888.

HONORABLE MENTION

The ten-year-old son of a London carpenter named Clark stabbed himself to death in May, 1787, after his parents upbraided him for stealing a halfpenny.

HONORABLE MENTION

Eleven-year-old Donyelle McCall of Ontario, California, shot herself with a .25-caliber pistol in April, 1985. The apparent reason was that her father had grounded Donyelle after finding her with a cigarette.

SUICIDE NOTE:

Mom, I didn't want to live to tell about this, so good-bye [sic]. Come visit my funeral if I have one.

—Donyelle McCall

I died at 11 a.m.

Dad would probably put me on a year's restriction. Don't put this in the newspaper.

Oh, yeah, I forgot to tell you I used the gun—yours. I'm sorry you don't have a daughter anymore. I didn't want to hurt you like this, but I didn't want to go through it. I wanted to grow up and be somebody, but now that I'm dead I have to go down.

I know you love me, but I don't want to tell my friends.

I love you so much, but I messed up. I know that I have to live with it, but the way dad walked out of here, I can't get over it. I wish we could just forget about it, but it's not that easy.

#92

Doodles Weaver

MY, WHAT A
DOODLED WEB WE WEAVE

In a wild world of wacky comedians, Doodles Weaver was the absolute zaniest, nuttiest, koo-koo-ka-jookiest of them all. Born Winstead Sheffield Weaver to a wealthy L.A. family who thought he resembled a doodlebug, he was a joker almost from the moment he popped out of mom's snatch. He was ALWAYS joking. The goofy gagster even slept beneath a photo of Christ which bore the inscription, "To Doodles, from J.C." As a nightclub comic, he told rib-ticklers such as, "You know how to milk a mouse? First, you get a small stool...." In the late forties, madcap musician Spike Jones discovered Doodles in a club and made him part of his Musical Depreciation Revue. Audiences couldn't contain themselves over Weaver's classic "Feetlebaum" routine, a mythic horse race recited to the strains of "The William Tell Overture": "It's Shirt Tail hanging out in front....Suspenders is bringing up the rear....Lighter Fluid is really burning up the

track." People went bananas over his phony ads for "Pootwaddle" car polish. Describing his act, Doodles said, "I'd hit my nose with a microphone and then start a song and get all mixed up with the words." Wherever Doodles went, giggles weren't far behind. He was Mr. Chuckles.

After parting with Spike Jones in the early fifties, Doodles went on to host television programs such as *The Doodles Weaver Show*, *A Day With Doodles*, and *Doodles's Club House*. Then one day in January, 1982, the whimsical jester shot himself twice in the chest with a .22-caliber rifle, spraying Honkwinkles and Flibberdegoots all over his Burbank house.



Doodles Weaver: too fucking funny.

#93

John Webster
SHEAR MADNESS

Few things bite a bigger bone than the deathbed conversion of someone who had otherwise bullied his way through this world with unpenitent violence. You have to negatively reevaluate the accomplishments of someone such as Ted Bundy, who bludgeoned countless women without blinking but then, as he faced the electric chair, backpedaled and said that smut rags had driven him to his deeds. Ted's status wouldn't have suffered if he had remained steadfast and admitted that he smacked his lips over a good bitch-clubbing.

John Webster was no such shrinking violet. He chose to kiss off with the same brute ferocity in which he had lived his short, savage life. He seemed not at all bothered that he had once sent a horse and cart careening over a cliff, fatally squashing a man standing on the ground below. And when the hardcore alcoholic from Leicester County, England, was tossed in jail



toward the end of 1870 for thrashing the piss out of his wife, it was just another Friday night. One can reasonably infer that his suicide wasn't prompted by concern for his battered spouse's well-being. Rather, it was pure selfishness, a quick way to quell his own misery.

Or maybe he just didn't like to bathe. When a prison guard brought him into a room for a procedural hosing-down, Webster snatched a pair of scissors which were laying on a table and plunged them into his own neck. When the guard tried to stop him, Webster ripped a gas bracket off the wall and started swinging at him. With his other hand, he kept skewering his own throat with the shears. The guard ran for assistance and came back with another guard, only to find that Webster had forced the scissors all the way through his neck, with their bloody tip protruding through the other side. After a struggle, the two officers were able to pin Webster down. They removed the scissors from his throat and hurled Webster into solitary confinement. When they returned with a doctor, Webster had plunged his fingers deep into the holes on both ends of his throat. He was trying to forcibly remove his own larynx. The rock-ribbed lunatic died within an hour.



In the same year as Webster's self-tracheotomy, a gal named Baker from Rochester, England, axed herself to death with one shot to the head, splitting her noggin open to the brain.

#94

George C. Wheeler
**HE BET IT ALL
ON LIQUID PIXIE DUST**

When police found George C. Wheeler in

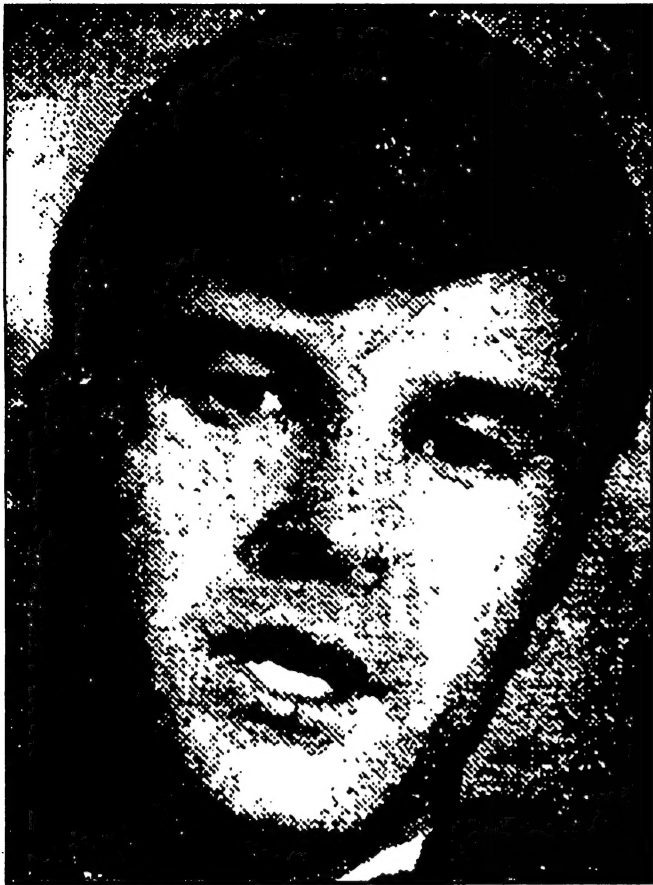
March, 1877, his brains were dripping out of his skull. He had placed his head in a trough connected to a murderous machine of his own making. After he had activated the device, a series of springs, pulleys, and gears set a large wheel spinning over his head. Attached to Wheeler's wheel were an axe-head and numerous small blades. For at least ten minutes, the machine hacked deep ridges into his cranium.

Despite his barbarous death, the Dundee, Michigan, resident wasn't strictly suicidal, for he had devised a second invention which he was certain would counteract the effects of the first. A twenty-two-year-old who was said to look thirty-five, Wheeler dodged social interaction in favor of ceaseless futzing with his chemistry set. In the six months prior to his demise, he had developed a chemical solution which he was sure would garner him worldwide adulation. It would undoubtedly be the greatest discovery in the history of man. He called it his "creative, all-changeable material assistant," a few drops of which would bring any dead body roaring back to life. In his precocious senility, Wheeler believed that a dram of this concoction would breathe the ghost back into his brutalized corpse. He placed a bottle of the solution next to his death machine with instructions that an acquaintance of his should sprinkle some over his cadaver. In fairness to Wheeler, the newspaper account of his suicide leads one to believe that everyone dismissed him as a Fruit Roll-Up and didn't even *try* to use his magic potion.

#95

Dan White
NO MORE TWINKIES

It ain't easy being a homophobe in the city by the bay. Maybe he was born fifty years too late, but Dan White loved Jack London's San Francisco. When he closed his eyes, he saw tugboats and sea gulls, red beards and wool



Dan White delivers yet another diatribe against the evils of petroleum jelly.

sweaters, warm dinner rolls and hot chowder. When he opened his eyes, he saw Sodom. He yearned for the days when the men were men, the women were women, and the anuses were marked EXIT ONLY.

Dan couldn't believe that a Catholic family man such as himself, a former cop, fireman, and Vietnam soldier, was now the odd man out in the city's new amoral climate. So when he got a chance to run for the city's Board of Supervisors, he seized it. "I am not going to be driven out of San Francisco," he vowed in a campaign brochure which bewailed the influx of "radicals, social deviates, and incorrigibles." Dan, a former amateur boxer, was willing to fight for the old values. "You must realize," the brochure went on, "there are thousands upon thousands of frustrated, angry people such as yourself waiting to unleash a fury that can and will eradicate the malignancies which blight our city." The scare tactics worked, and Dan was elected.

But he found himself an unwanted presence in an aggressively liberal city government. As the only Supervisor opposed to gay rights, he was at particular odds with pro-gay Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk, generally acknowledged as the country's first out-of-the-closet politician. White quit after less than a year at City Hall, citing his family's inability to survive on the puny salary. But he suddenly changed his mind and asked Moscone to reappoint him. Never fond of Dan, Moscone hedged on giving his answer. White was certain

that Moscone and Milk had teamed up to prevent him from coming back. On the morning of November 27, 1978, he paid an unscheduled visit to the mayor's study at City Hall and shot him dead. He reloaded, walked down the corridor, and fired five rounds at Milk, killing him.

Although White hated liberal politics, they worked in his favor during his murder trial. Using the infamous "Twinkie Defense," his lawyer argued that White's rampaging sweet tooth deepened his depression and thus diminished his capacity to make moral decisions. The jury swallowed this load of horseshit and convicted White of voluntary manslaughter instead of first-degree murder. The verdict sparked the "White Night" riot of May 21, 1979, where furious gays threw rocks

at City Hall and flaming homosexuals set fire to police cars.

When White was paroled in January, 1984, an estimated nine thousand protestors filled San Francisco's predominantly queer Castro Street. Mayor Dianne Feinstein warned Dan not to return, both for the city's tranquility and his own safety. But after a yearlong parole, Dan was back. He grew facial hair to disguise his appearance and skulked around his neighborhood in a yellow 1970 Le Sabre, always peering over his shoulder. When people approached him and said, "You're Dan White," he'd break into a sweat and reply, "I don't know what you're talking about." Hardcore gay activists slipped threatening notes under his door.

On the morning of October 21, 1985, Dan drove the Le Sabre into his garage and succumbed to sweet monoxide. On his cassette deck was an Irish ballad that included the lyrics, "Oh, my God—what have they done to the town I loved so well?" Down on Castro, a youthful male was seen prancing down the street singing a different tune: "Ding, dong, the wicked witch is dead."

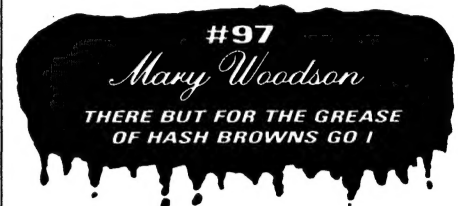


If one were a dialectical materialist, one could

view D.R. Widdison's suicide as a trenchant commentary on the alienation of wage-slavery. Obviously believing his role as an industrial pawn to be more important than his status as a human being, his *London Times* obituary referred to him as an "unemployed labourer." In May, 1987, the sixty-one-year-old inhabitant of Newark, England, grabbed a hammer—one-half of the hammer-and-sickle dyad—and drove two five-inch nails into his skull. Scrutinized under the rigors of Hegelian analysis, Widdison's act of self-carpentry might be interpreted as a damning criticism of a system which values work more than it values the worker. But we prefer to dispense with such fucked-up logic. To us, he was merely a bleeding loony.



Reflecting a technological innovation which renders workers even more useless, Raymond Farrell of London died in August, 1992, after shooting himself in the head with a nail gun.



If there's a thin line between love and hate, Mary Woodson had crossed over it. She had fallen out of love with singer Al Green, a man whose voice was as smooth as musk-scented body lotion. But before she said goodbye to the ebony minstrel, the charismatic troubadour whose "Call Me" and "Take Me to the River" are still being covered today, she had to make him bear the full brunt of her disdain. Did she hire a gang of thugs to work him over? Did she run to the press with fabricated tales of abuse? Did she drag him into court with a fake palimony suit? No, asshole. On the morning of October 18, 1974, as the smiling pop star was getting out of the tub, Woodson barged into the bathroom with a pan of boiling grits and threw it on Green's wet, chocolatey skin. She then fled into an adjacent bedroom and shot herself with Green's .38-caliber automatic. Perhaps ruffled by his breakfast with the devil, Al later abandoned the secular realm and became Reverend Al Green, your gospel-singin' pal.



Give praise to Messrs. Edison and Tesla, for by harnessing the electron they have allowed us to toast bread, blow-dry our hair, save our thoughts on computer disks, and execute criminals. When it came to capital punishment,

a Polish engineer with the unitary appellation of Wrzesinaski favored the electric chair to the gallows or the firing squad. He developed his own model and tried peddling it to government officials in Warsaw, but they decided to stick with their Old World methods of judicial murder. Having wasted months designing the chair, Wrzesinaski chose to embarrass those who dared reject his creation. He would prove that it worked by taking it for a test drive. He stepped into the chair on January 16, 1927, strapped himself down, fastened the headpiece, and flipped on the switch. The machine performed beautifully.

HONORABLE MENTION

Connecting metal plates to a dining-room chair via a light socket, amateur electrician Otto Weihle of Chicago fried his naked ass on what he termed his "hot seat" in June of 1928.

HONORABLE MENTION

Welsh electrical-engineering teacher Bill Lambert jolted himself to death in June, 1983, by running electric wires to a metal chair.

HONORABLE MENTION

After attaching metal electrodes to his chest and back, George West of Rutherford, New Jersey, tugged on a string leading to a light socket one night in October, 1922. He was killed instantly.

HONORABLE MENTION

On November 1, 1938, seventy-two-year-old Joseph Brown Rice of Santa Monica, California, prepared himself a bath, sat down in it, and lowered a live wire into the water.

HONORABLE MENTION

Despondent over failing health, Edward Carnell of London fastened electrodes to his body and turned on the juice in December, 1982.

HONORABLE MENTION

Also troubled by the physical deterioration of his twilight years, neurologist Ritchie Russell of Oxford, England, ran a live cable to his arm in January, 1981.

HONORABLE MENTION

In 1921, Louis Huc of Rieux-Minervois in southern France committed what is perhaps the first electrical suicide on record. He tied a rock to one end of a copper wire, wrapped the other end around his wrist, and tossed the stone over a five-thousand-volt high-tension wire. The cable, which normally provided the power for a railroad, zapped him like a fly.



Suicide often seems to be a chronic loser's final bid at dignity, an attempt to wipe one's slate clean by getting rid of the slate. A person would hope that a life which had cut them no slack would at least allow them to bow out with a modicum of class.

Life would allow no such luxury for John B. Young. He had once stockpiled large, stinking sums of lucre as a Manhattan builder, but financial flush-outs of the 1870s had greatly humbled him. In 1876, he tried slitting his throat in Chicago but could only muster a flesh wound. In April of the following year, he visited his nephew's third-floor New York office, complain-

ing loudly about financial setbacks. Embarrassed by Young's in-office histrionics, the nephew tried to quietly escort his uncle outside. They had almost reached the street when Young ran back upstairs. His nephew chased him into his office, only to find that Young had jumped from the window.

Now, if Young had merely splatted onto the street, at least he would have died in his chosen manner. But as a fiendish fate would have it, he landed on a steel sign-rod which jutted up from the sidewalk. The rod snapped under Young's weight, and his guts became impaled on it like a record on a turntable's spindle, passing out through his back. Flapping about like a speared fish, Young slithered five feet down to the rod's base. A cop came by and tried to lift him, only to have him sink all the way down again. Young was by this time snow-blind with pain. Two men came by with a stool and, with the added leverage it provided, were able to wrench Young up and off the iron bar. Niagaras of blood were spurting from the giant hole in his abdomen. He was taken by ambulance to Chambers Street Hospital, where an examining physician observed that the rod had fractured Young's pelvis, ruptured his bladder, and ripped through five different areas of his intestines. When death finally came to take him, it was on its terms—slow, torturous, and without honor.



"The wise man," wrote Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, "will for reasonable cause make his own exit from life on his country's behalf, or for the sake of his friends, or if he suffer intolerable pain, mutilation, or incurable disease." For ninety-eight years he found no "reasonable cause" for killing himself. Then, as he was returning home from lecturing one day in 332 B.C., it happened. As the result of this tragic incident, he beat the ground with his fist and wailed, "Earth, dost thou demand me? I am ready," whereupon he hurried home and hanged himself. He had considered life worth living until that bodeful day when he stumbled and broke a toe. ■

Suicide